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# AN AFFAIR TO REMEMBER



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JULY/AUGUST 1993

"TO ASSESS  
THE PERFORMANCE  
OF JOURNALISM...  
TO HELP STIMULATE  
CONTINUING  
IMPROVEMENT IN  
THE PROFESSION,  
AND TO SPEAK OUT  
FOR WHAT IS  
RIGHT, FAIR,  
AND DECENT"

From the founding editorial,  
1961



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### THE BLUE-COLLAR ELITE?

According to D. D. Guttenplan ("The Americanization of *The Economist*," *CJR*, May/June), *The Economist* is clearly not a magazine "for the masses," because it costs \$110 a year. If cost is the criterion, our daily newspapers must be just as elitist.

In towns across the country — towns full of unemployed readers and blue-collar readers and low-income readers — mass-market newspapers regularly charge \$110 or more for a year's subscription, more than five times what Tina Brown charges the nation's elite for *The New Yorker*.

In 1833 a printer named Benjamin Day put out the first issue of the *New York Sun*, a paper with a populist slogan ("It Shines for ALL") and a populist price — one cent per issue. At the time, the city's other papers cost six cents a copy and believed themselves worth every penny, at least, so Day's venture seemed vaguely insulting as well as foolhardy, a cheapening of the profession in more ways than one. Instead, the triumphant *Sun* became the first in a wave of successful "penny papers" that revolutionized American journalism.

Is no one today following Benjamin Day's example? I'm surprised that in all their moaning and breast-beating about wan circulation, disappearing target readers, and the need to compete more effectively with television, I have never heard a newspaper editor, publisher, manager, or consultant make this simple suggestion: cut the price.

**ANDY DUNCAN**

COPY EDITOR  
*NEWS & RECORD*  
GREENSBORO, N.C.

### TIME TALKS BACK: THE DUSKO DODER STORY

My old friend and colleague Howard Kurtz of *The Washington Post* thinks *Time*'s article about former *Post* correspondent Dusko Doder illustrates the reluctance of news organizations "to fess up about their own mistakes" ("Why The Press is Always Right," *CJR*, May/June 1993). What *Time*'s story and its aftermath really illustrate is the unwillingness of journalists to submit to the kind of

scrutiny they routinely impose on others.

First, please allow me to correct Kurtz's distorted description of the story in question:

■ He says it repeats "seven-year-old allegations" against Doder. The implication is that the allegations, being seven years old, were already well known. In fact, neither the *Post* nor anyone else had ever reported them.

■ He minimizes the importance of KGB Colonel Vitaly Yurchenko, the defector who told the U.S. that Doder accepted at least \$1,000 from the KGB. Kurtz doesn't mention that the CIA and FBI to this day have found no instance in which the huge amount of information on Yurchenko's list was not truthful. Indeed, on January 26, 1993, just three weeks after *Time*'s story on Doder ran, *The Washington Post* ran a story saying exactly that — although the story failed to mention that one of the items on Yurchenko's list was Dusko Doder.

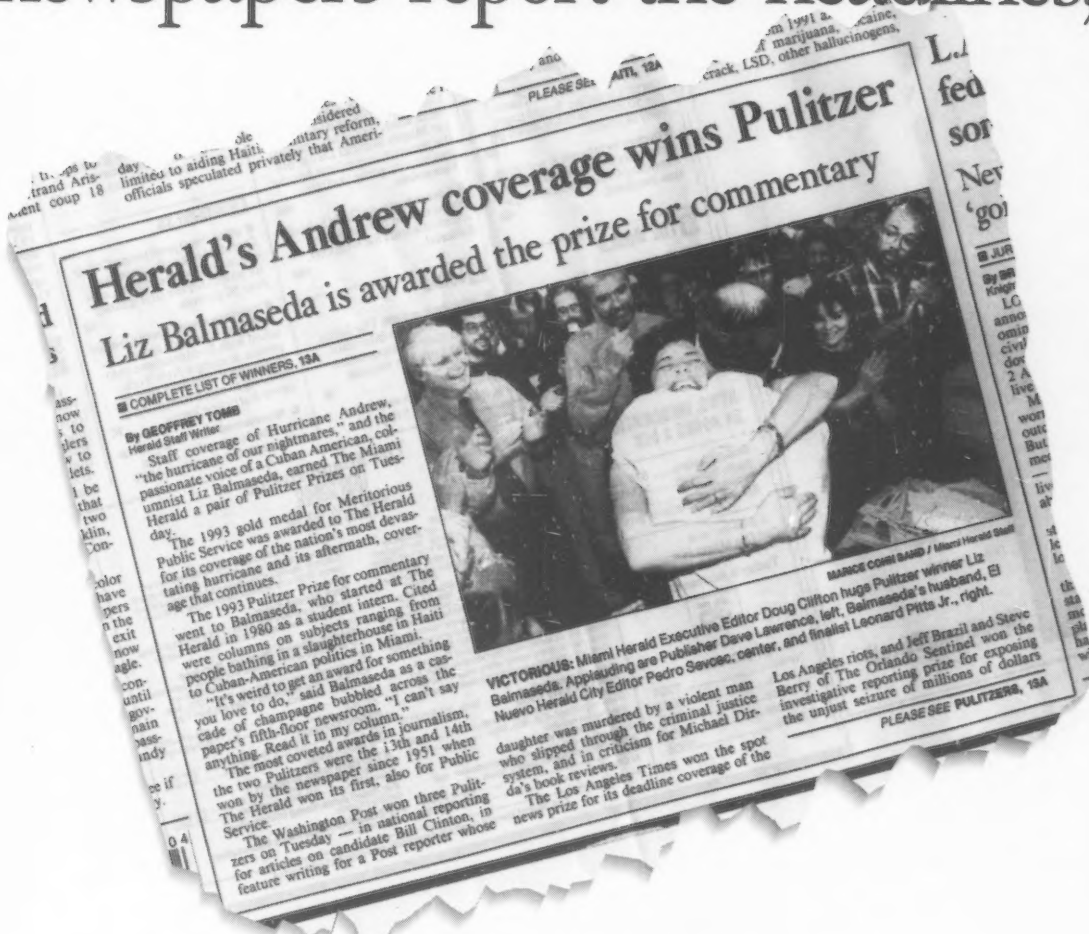
■ Kurtz asserts that Yurchenko's information about Doder was "second hand," and so it was — if you consider information given to Yurchenko during an official meeting by a high-ranking KGB colleague with direct personal knowledge of the case to be second hand.

■ Kurtz reports that former FBI director William Webster told him that the bureau had "investigated the Doder matter and found 'no evidence' of 'any improper activity.'" Despite Kurtz's suggestion to the contrary, Webster said nothing of the sort to *Time*. Here is what Webster did say: "It was clear [Doder] was being fed information by the KGB" while in Moscow, although "the

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# Usually Knight-Ridder newspapers report the headlines,



*but around Pulitzer Prize time each year  
we always make a few.*

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- The Miami Herald: Gold Medal for Public Service
- Liz Balmaseda, The Miami Herald: Commentary



**Knight-Ridder**

recruitment hadn't gone all the way." Webster also said — as *Time* reported — that there was no evidence of an improper relationship between Doder and the KGB after Doder returned to the U.S.

■ Kurtz writes that the current head of Russia's Foreign Intelligence Service told the *Post* there was "nothing to back up the Doder charge." The quote and the denial are meaningless. They come from the *wrong agency*! Yurchenko told his CIA interrogators that Doder had been paid by the KGB's Second Chief Directorate (the Soviet equivalent of the FBI), whose files now reside with the Russian Ministry of Security. Following *Time*'s publication of the Doder story, however, the *Post* made inquiries to Russia's Foreign Intelligence Service, which inherited the files of the KGB's First Chief Directorate (the Soviet equivalent of the CIA), and was told that the directorate never paid him. Correct, and Yurchenko never said it did. Asked recently to comment on this discrepancy, Foreign Intelligence Service spokesman Yuri Kobaladze said: "We had an exact question [from the *Post*]: whether [Doder] received money from KGB officers. That is the exact question. And we said that, as far as Russian Intelligence Service is concerned, which was part of the KGB's First Directorate, we didn't find any information, no support to this theory whatsoever [italics added]." And what about the files of the Second Directorate in the Ministry of Security? Said Kobaladze: "You'll have to ask them." But *Time* had already done that. The Ministry of Security refused to comment in any way about the Doder case.

■ Finally, Kurtz notes that "Doder is now suing *Time* for libel." But Kurtz neglects to mention that Doder is suing not in the U.S. or in Russia, the two places where all the events took place. He is suing in England, a country that plays no role whatever in the story but where libel suits are easy to file and notoriously difficult to defend against.

The question remains: Does *Time*, whose editors did not lightly decide to run the story, owe someone an apology? I think not. Here are the *undisputed* facts:

1) A major KGB defector of known reliability told his CIA handlers that Doder, whose 1981-85 performance for the *Post* in Moscow was stunningly successful, had accepted a \$1,000 payment from the KGB. The defector did not know if there had been other payments.

2) The FBI conducted an investigation and concluded that many of Doder's remarkable scoops in Moscow were fed to him by the KGB.

3) The allegations against Doder were taken seriously at the highest levels of the

U.S. government. Following Doder's return from Moscow to the U.S. and his assignment to the *Post*'s national security beat, then-FBI director Webster personally alerted the *Post*'s executive editor, Ben Bradlee, who sounded "general quarters" and called in the *Post*'s top lawyer, the late Edward Bennett Williams, to investigate.

4) The FBI set up a "sting" to see if Doder would pass classified information back to Moscow. (He did not.)

5) Five months after Webster alerted Bradlee, Doder left the *Post*, telling family and friends at the time that he felt he was "under a cloud" at the paper. He went to work for *U.S. News & World Report*. Two years later, he left *U.S. News* and has not worked full time for any publication since. A Yugoslav-born U.S. citizen, Doder today resides in Belgrade.

As always in this kind of case, there are many *disputed* points as well. But I believe that the undisputed facts alone justify *Time*'s story. That Kurtz and some other journalists disagree merely illustrates the existence of a double standard where charges against journalists are concerned.

**STANLEY W. CLOUD**  
WASHINGTON BUREAU CHIEF  
TIME MAGAZINE

Howard Kurtz replies: *It strikes me as unfair for Stan Cloud to keep charging that the KGB "fed" information to Dusko Doder, who is an excellent reporter, when that is no different than the White House or federal prosecutors "feeding" information to American journalists. For all of Time's dark suggestions, an FBI investigation failed to establish any evidence of an improper relationship between Doder and the KGB. Cloud is right in insisting that there be no double standard for journalists, and that's why I remain highly critical of Time's flimsy report.*

## OF GUTS AND THE GUILD

"The Gutless Guild?" CJR's March/April cover screams at us. Very inappropriately!

The cover line goes far beyond anything suggested even in a story in which interpretations leave the facts far behind. Nothing in that account supports the idea that the guild has run out of fight.

The gutless guild? At the New York *Daily News*, although we stand alone against Mort Zuckerman, we have refused to accept the surrender terms of a contract without arbitration of dismissals. In one of the most difficult situations our union has ever faced, we're still fighting.

Does this seem gutless?

■ The guild is the only union striving aggressively to stem the loss of jobs and

newspaper quality produced by growing local monopoly and chain concentration, through legislation to limit chain size and curb monopoly papers.

■ When Copley Newspapers told a tiny thirty-two-member unit at the Waukegan, Illinois, *News-Sun* three years ago that there would be no contract without extensive take-backs and then posted conditions after declaring a bargaining impasse, the guild refused to take arrogance for an answer. It not only stuck to its guns but reloaded them, launching an advertising boycott and a campaign of community enlightenment through radio commercials and leafleting. Two months ago the company took back its take-backs, improved its "final offer" considerably, and settled the contract.

Author Stephen J. Simurda certainly paid more attention to reality than your headwriter. But we quarrel vigorously with some of what are presented as facts and their context.

For example:

■ Simurda cites a decline of more than 3,000 in guild membership over the past six years but fails to note, although it was pointed out to him, that the overwhelming majority of that number was a result of recession job cuts.

■ He makes our alleged insensitivity to the importance of organizing a recurrent theme, picking up a charge made internally by political opponents who have their own agenda. But he fails to note that we have spent \$2 million on special organizing projects in the past five years, including almost \$400,000 to support campaigns in southern Ontario, whose successes Simurda credits strictly to the local.

■ He trashes a guild VDT safety and health program developed early on and generally recognized as unsurpassed anywhere in the labor movement, solely on the basis of an RSI problem at one unit, *The New York Times*. His report that little of the guild's efforts at overcoming RSI and other VDT problems "has translated into pressure on publishers or contract language" is contradicted by the facts. We have obtained vastly more in ergonomics and other measures through pressure outside the formal contract framework.

■ He states that our International Executive Board opposed last year's convention approval of a strategic planning study to help set the union's course, although the record clearly shows that the board only opposed a mandate to complete the study by this year's convention rather than spread out the cost (which it is now plain will exceed \$100,000). After a motion to remove this deadline failed, the study was approved without opposition by anyone from the board.

# 1992

## *John Swett Awards for Media Excellence*

The John Swett Awards are named for the founder of the California Teachers Association, who was also the state's fourth superintendent of public instruction. The Awards honor individual journalists, newspapers, journals, and broadcast stations for outstanding coverage of public education issues. Nominations for the awards are made by local CTA affiliates, but the judging of the entries is done by a panel of professional journalists.

### John Swett Winners

**Diana Walsh**  
*San Francisco Examiner*  
**Jean Merl**  
*Los Angeles Times*  
**Rich Redding**  
*The News-Pilot, San Pedro*  
**Susan Herbert**  
*San Francisco Independent*

**Charles Piller**  
*MACWORLD Magazine*  
**Los Angeles Times**  
*MACWORLD Magazine*  
**KCET-TV, Los Angeles**  
**KJEO-TV, Fresno**  
**KGO-TV, San Francisco**

### Certificate of Merit Winners

**Stepanie Chavez, Los Angeles Times**  
**Shann Nix, San Francisco Chronicle**  
**Vince Golla, San Ramon Valley Times**  
**Stuart Glascock, Torrance Daily Breeze**  
**Los Angeles Times**

**Radio Bilingue, Inc., Fresno**  
**Jesse Watters, KCBS Newsradio, San Francisco**  
**Rudy Trevino, KFSN-TV, Fresno**  
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D.A. ("Del") Weber, President ♦ Ralph A. Flynn, Executive Director ♦ Ned Hopkins, Associate Executive Director  
Tommye Hutto, Manager, Communications ♦ Sandra Jackson, Media Consultant  
California Teachers Association

An Affiliate of the National Education Association

None of this is to deny that we face serious problems as a result of the economy, contraction of the newspaper industry, and twelve years of a political climate conducive to anything but union growth. For much of that time we have been struggling to hold our own against publishers who have decided that now is the time to take back what their organized employees have wrung from them over half a century. Neither contract settlements nor organizing successes have come easy.

But the times they are a-changing. A Republican veto pen no longer waits in the Oval Office for legislation that would restore balance to the bargaining amendments that would give unions a fair shot at organizing success by eliminating employer delay and obstruction in the NLRB's labyrinthine representation processes.

The first crocuses are already starting to sprout — contract settlements in spots where they long have appeared remote. And our organizing prospects have begun to mushroom; success in five major efforts in which we are now engaged could add some 10,000 members to our ranks.

Meanwhile, a recent poll conducted in connection with the strategic planning study provides the answer of a majority of our members to the question posed by the inside

headline of CJR's story: "Sticking With the Union?" It's a clear "yes."

The survey by an outside pollster shows that, despite widespread concern over job security, 70 percent of our members rate the guild's bargaining and contract-servicing performance as good or very good and feel that, without guild representation, their jobs would be worse (35 percent) or much worse (36 percent).

**CHARLES DALE**  
PRESIDENT

THE NEWSPAPER GUILD  
SILVER SPRINGS, MD.

## STAR PERFORMER

I imagine that by now 1,453,275 alumni of the dear, dead *Washington Star* have pointed out Nathan Miller's error in *Theodore Roosevelt: A Life*, excerpted in the Short Takes section of the May/June CJR. Even so, I've got to get this off my chest.

Clifford K. Berryman, who first drew what became the Teddy bear, was not a cartoonist for *The Washington Post*. God forbid. He and his son, James T. Berryman, were editorial cartoonists for the *Washington Evening Star* and, as a matter of fact, won Pulitzer Prizes while so employed — Cliff in 1944, Jim in 1950.

I came to the *Star* the year Jim won his

Pulitzer, by which time Cliff had departed (whether through retirement or death I am not sure). One thing I am sure of, however: both of these gentlemen would be apoplectic if they were around today to see their names sullied by association with the hated *Post*.

**WILLIAM HINES**  
LOVETTSVILLE, VA.

## POSTCARDS FROM WONDERLAND

The assumption in Andrew Schneider's survey on the effects of using computers on overall quality and readability — as well as that of the resulting CJR piece ("The Downside of Wonderland," CJR, March/April) — is that a technology (computers) should have a qualitative effect on reporting. The premise confuses the tool with the trade.

The press would do well to stop treating new technologies — computer technology in particular — with such false dichotomies, and help the general public see these technologies as what they are: tools that require human competence and thoughtfulness to use properly.

**GALEN GRUMAN**  
PRESIDENT

COMPUTER PRESS ASSOCIATION  
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIF.

"Radio — The Forgotten Medium," the summer issue of the *Media Studies Journal*, takes a comprehensive look at America's most pervasive and most overlooked medium. In this issue, journalists and scholars survey the airwaves to debunk the recurring myth that radio is dying. Topics examined by the authors include the impact of new technologies and a new regulatory climate on the radio industry, the radio talk show boom and its influence on politics and society, radio's fragmented music scene, radio economics, the BBC, and the overall health of AM, public radio, comedy, drama and news. Authors include FCC Commissioner Andrew Barrett, Steven Salyer, president of American Public Radio, and David Bartlett, president of the Radio Television News Directors Association.

The *Media Studies Journal* is published quarterly by The Freedom Forum Media Studies Center at Columbia University and is available on a subscription basis. For a complimentary copy of "Radio—The Forgotten Medium" mail the coupon below.



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In "The Downside of Wonderland," Andrew Schneider did a good job of pointing out the traps of techno-journalism. But he understated one point, and overstated another.

First, dirty data aren't the only way to screw up a computer-assisted story. Very few reporters have the luxury to skew statistics or misread nine-track tape.

Nine-tenths of computer-assisted journalism goes toward deadline reporting. Reporters use computers daily to check court, bankruptcy, and elections records. Their problems arise from clerks and officials who are either unqualified or unwilling to provide computer data.

The trick for these reporters is to know what laws apply to protecting computer records. Many agencies protect computer records the old-fashioned way — by printing reams of paper copies. By knowing the legal requirements to archiving records, reporters can often fish out a record that a computer might say doesn't exist.

On a lesser point, Schneider highlighted the use of laptop computers by reporters covering Hurricane Andrew. But in south Florida, reporters with fancy computers had trouble seeing their screens, and the battery packs soon died. Chumps using Tandy 100s went trouble-free, pumping in fresh AA batteries whenever needed.

**JOHN HILL**

STAFF WRITER

SARASOTA HERALD-TRIBUNE

SARASOTA, FLA.

## THE REAL PRICE OF AIR

In an otherwise well-reported story titled "Cheap Air" (CJR, March/April), Richard Mahler has included some quite dated information. Mahler reports that our rates are \$50 per produced minute for "unlimited and perpetual rights" to audio material. In fact, our minimum rate for such material is \$60, and we acquire rights for the "unlimited worldwide radio broadcast," not "unlimited" rights, as reported. The distinction is an important one; Monitor Radio does not acquire any non-broadcast rights.

**DAVE CREAGH**

DIRECTOR

AMERICAN RADIO PROGRAMMING

MONITOR RADIO

BOSTON, MASS.

## LESSONS OF EL SALVADOR

Having reported for seven and a half years from El Salvador, I was glad to see your two articles recounting the Reagan administration's coverup of the El Mozote massacre and the U.S. embassy's techniques for manipulating the news ("The Mozote Massacre" and "Official Sources, 'Western

Diplomats,' and Other Voices from the Mission," CJR, January/February). But we need to further examine why the U.S. media didn't challenge the administration lies.

First, the Reagan administration was media savvy. It used the docile Washington press corps to publish its disinformation on Central America as fact. But not until the election of José Napoleon Duarte in 1984 and the capitulation of congressional Democrats to the administration policy did the media wholeheartedly jump on the Duarte bandwagon. They forgot Duarte's shameful role as front man for the military junta during the height of repression from 1980-82 and parroted all the characterizations of Duarte, as a "courageous reformer" and a "democrat," churned out by the Reagan administration.

With all Washington singing Duarte's praises, media interest plummeted and editors were increasingly skeptical of stories that challenged the conventional wisdom that Duarte was a "success story." For the administration, no news from El Salvador was good news.

The U.S. ambassadors served as proconsuls in El Salvador and the press flacks in the fortress-like U.S. embassy functioned as the Duarte government's p.r. firm. Journalists who shared the embassy's assumptions received good access to the embassy's large store of gossip and information and also had good access to the Duarte government. The embassy, however, would punish journalists whose reporting questioned U.S. policy or was considered too favorable to the leftist rebels by cutting their access, complaining to their editors, and even pointing them out as enemies to the Salvadoran government and the military.

The television networks developed especially cozy relationships with the embassy. I know of two network correspondents who would fly into the country, have dinner with the embassy information officer, and start cranking out spots for prime time the next day without consulting anybody else.

The embassy was especially touchy about the Salvadoran army's continuing human rights abuses, since it was one of the only issues the U.S. Congress was mandated to glance at. So the embassy press flacks became professional apologists for the Salvadoran army, covering up abuses or excusing them, and describing the leftist rebels as "terrorists."

While the guerrillas were also guilty of abuses, they were not on the same massive and systematic scale as those committed by the U.S.-backed army. But U.S. reporters would equate the rights abuses of both sides, perhaps to appear even-handed to their edi-

tors back in the States, perhaps to maintain their good relations with the embassy and the Salvadoran army.

And the editors back home, generally more conservative and influenced by the prevailing image of the saintly Duarte and the evil Marxist guerrillas, had a different standard of proof for both sides, requiring that alleged abuses by the U.S.-backed Salvadoran army be thoroughly documented while demanding little proof before printing supposed guerrilla violations.

The *New York Times* reported one tale of guerrillas executing villagers simply because they wanted to vote and then stuffing their voting cards in their mouths. The *Times* article was then cited by the State Department as their prime example of guerrilla atrocities in a booklet sent to every congressman on the eve of the 1988 Salvadoran elections. The supposed guerrilla atrocity turned out to be an invention of a Salvadoran army psychological operations unit. It had never happened, as the *Times* acknowledged six months after its original report.

Unfortunately, it took the Salvadoran army's murder of six Jesuit priests in 1989 to finally wake up the Congress and the media to what the supposedly reformed and professional army was capable of. Now, with a

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For applications and further program information, write:

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definitive report from the U.N.-sponsored Truth Commission and with Democrats in the White House, congressmen and editorial writers are accusing the Reagan administration of lying — which is exactly what some of us were saying years ago, but nobody wanted to hear about it then.

**CHRIS NORTON**  
FORESTVILLE, CALIF.

## BACK TO THE RECORD

I hope there is still time to respond to Howard Kurtz's romanticized overview of *The Record* ("A Bad Case of the '80s," *CJR*,

January/February) — specifically, the criticism rendered by now-retired *Record* editor Mark Howat that under the leadership of David Hall the paper lacked the editorial standards Kurtz remembers from his tenure there years ago.

Those of us on Hall's management team, including the current administration's capable managing editor, served under excruciatingly difficult and sad circumstances, while the paper's classified slipped precipitously, the newshole and editorial budget diminished, and the staff was depleted by attrition, hiring ceilings, salary

freezes, and devastating layoffs.

As an unabashedly vocal and dissatisfied editorial administrator and restaurant critic who was out of the loop of daily crisis during much of that time, Howat was a lamentable source. To paint a truer picture, your author might have explored the breadth of talent at the paper, the state and national accolades, the circulation success of the new, albeit controversial, Saturday section, and the editorial risks taken and innovations introduced during that era.

Howat's implied criticism of those of us who, despite a decaying support system, believed in the importance of the work we did and encouraged our brave staffs to do so, cannot remain unchallenged. Nor can the implication by the *Record's* chairman of the board that Hall-era editors were somehow responsible for the paper's economic decline during a period of national economic disaster coupled with highly questionable corporate choices at the highest levels of *Record* leadership, and that we let him down.

Surely, it was the other way around.

**ROBERTA PLUTZIK**  
NEW YORK, N.Y.

*Editors' note: Roberta Plutzik is a former lifestyle editor of The Record.*

## NEW YORK POSTSCRIPT

Whatever else it may mean, Rupert Murdoch's return to the *New York Post* ("The Greatest Tab Story Ever Told," *CJR*, May/June) isn't inspiring much hope for newsroom diversity.

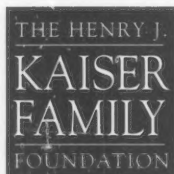
The New York Association of Black Journalists has urged the bankruptcy court to consider "Murdoch's legacy of race-baiting, sensationalism, and partisan coverage at the *Post*" before permanently waiving the FCC ban against his owning both the paper and WNYW-TV.

And it argued that any extension of his temporary stewardship be subject to increased presence of minority journalists. As noted in the *CJR* article, the paper had no black cityside reporters when Pete Hamill became editor under publisher Steven Hoffenberg. Murdoch's eight-year tenure had left the *Post* dead last among New York City dailies in a 1989 count of minority journalists by the American Society of Newspaper Editors.

Rights activists and black elected officials have threatened opposition to a waiver unless Murdoch comes across with minority hires. Let's keep our fingers crossed.

**LAWRENCE MUHAMMAD**  
LOUISVILLE, KY.

*To be considered for publication in the September/October issue, letters should be received by July 23. Letters are subject to editing for clarity and space.*



## Announces THE KAISER MEDIA FELLOWS IN HEALTH FOR 1993

*Six journalists have been selected as 1993 Kaiser Media fellows, in the first year of a new annual fellowship program for health journalists:*

**Lisa Belkin**, healthcare reporter, *The New York Times*

**Mary Flannery**, health and medical reporter, *The Philadelphia Daily News*

**Julie Kosterlitz**, staff correspondent, *The National Journal*

**Linda Roach Monroe**, health and medicine reporter, *The Miami Herald*

**Rebecca Perl**, former health and science reporter, *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*

**Stuart Schear**, health and education reporter, *The MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour*

In 1994, the Kaiser Media Fellowships Program will again award up to six fellowships a year to print, television, and radio journalists and editors interested in health policy and public health. Applications for the 1994 program will be available shortly, for submission by March 1994. The aim is to provide health journalists with a highly flexible range of opportunities to pursue individual projects related to health policy and public health issues.

For more information, or to apply for the 1994 awards, write to:

**Penny Duckham**  
Executive Director of the Kaiser Media Fellowships Program  
Kaiser Family Foundation  
2400 Sand Hill Road  
Menlo Park, CA 94025

The Kaiser Family Foundation is an independent health care foundation and is not affiliated with Kaiser Permanente or Kaiser Industries.

### *Kaiser Media Fellows Advisory Committee:*

Hale Champion, Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University

Anne Gudenkauf, Senior Science Editor, National Public Radio

David Perlman, Science Editor, *The San Francisco Chronicle*

Eileen Shanahan, Washington Bureau Chief, *St. Petersburg Times*

# CHRONICLE

## WHO KILLED JONATHAN MOYLE?

A British Journalist and the Iraqgate Factor

Friends and colleagues may never know whether Danny Casolaro — the investigative journalist found dead in a motel room in Martinsburg, West Virginia, two years ago — killed himself or was murdered (see "The Octopus File," *CJR*, November/December 1991).

This is not the case with his British counterpart, Jonathan Moyle, the twenty-eight-year-old editor of the British trade journal *Defense Helicopter World*. In March 1990, he was found hanging in a closet in a hotel room in Santiago, Chile, where he had been covering the Santiago air show as a guest of the Chilean air force. Chilean police listed the case as a suicide and British officials told journalists that Moyle had died accidentally in the course of a bizarre erotic act.

But seventeen months later, following pressure from Moyle's father and further examination of the evidence, a Chilean judge reopened the case and pronounced the cause of death as murder. Moyle, it turns out, had been drugged, suffocated with a pillow, injected in the heel with a lethal substance, then strung up in the closet. So Moyle's friends and colleagues know how he died. The remaining question is, Why was he killed?

Much of the speculation centers on Carlos Cardoen, a Chilean arms manufacturer and procurer for Iraq President Saddam Hussein. Moyle's father, Anthony, believes that two telephone



warnings his son received during the last week of his life came from a Cardoen aide. He thinks his son may have been eliminated to keep secret Cardoen's role in Iraqgate, the West's clandestine rearming of Iraq. Cardoen vehemently denies any involvement.

Other journalists in Santiago at the time confirm that Moyle indeed interviewed officials from Cardoen's company and several officers from the Chilean air force. What none can confirm is whether he was looking into any link with Iraq. Investigative journalists in Britain keep pursuing this link because, without it, they believe, Moyle's death makes little sense.

There is no question that Cardoen had dealt with Iraq for many years. As far back as 1987, *The New York Times* reported that he had made a fortune by selling cluster bombs to Iraq during its eight-year war with Iran. The U.S. has been investigating him in connection with the illegal export of zirconium for such bombs. With the war winding down in the late 1980s, Cardoen began searching for a new product. What he discovered was helicopters. Congress-

**Did the editor of *Defense Helicopter World* run afoul of a supplier for Saddam?**

sional papers detail how Cardoen tried to manufacture a cheap attack helicopter from a customized Bell Jet Ranger, one of the world's most readily available commercial helicopters. By March 1990, he was ready to offer it at international arms bazaars; Moyle may have seen his mock-up displayed on the Cardoen stand at the Santiago air fair — a display that created a buzz of interest among potential third-world clients. According to defense industry sources, Saddam Hussein ordered more than fifty.

At the time, few Americans had heard of Saddam. Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, which propelled his name to the front pages, was still four months away. The Iran-Iraq war had ended only two years before, leaving Iraq's military in tatters. But Saddam was rebuilding quickly, supported by billions of dollars the United States and its allies had secretly sent to Baghdad (see "Iraqgate: The Big One That (Almost) Got Away," *CJR*,



## SOUND BITE

“**S**ouffle writing is when a reporter describes, describes, and describes. And the reader will read, read, and read — and find nothing. No substance. No meaning. No meat. Souffle. This term is ... used — discreetly — by some [Style writers] to describe the words of others. But because such pieces are often beautiful pieces of writing, they often make Style’s front page.”

Alfred Friendly Press Fellow Mae Ghalwash, Cairo bureau chief of *The Arab News*, in an essay about her time as a fellow spent at the Style section of *The Washington Post*.

March/April). Some of the goods for this buildup had passed through Cardoen’s hands in Santiago — a fact that, at the time of Moyle’s visit, had yet to be discovered. It was not until November 1992, when three executives of machine-tool manufacturer Matrix Churchill were charged by British authorities with illegally passing militarily useful goods to Iraq, that evidence emerged showing that Britain had passed high-tech products to Iraq via Cardoen.

The fact that Jonathan Moyle’s name appeared on certain Matrix Churchill court documents led his father to conclude that the British government knew more about his son’s death than it would admit. Politicians from the opposition parties have even accused the government of a cover-up. Though the British foreign secretary, Douglas Hurd, raised Moyle’s murder in a January meeting with his Chilean opposite number, neither government seems particularly eager to push the case vigorously.

Indeed, the only official investigation into Moyle’s death still underway is in Chile, but the presiding judge has 2,000 other cases on his docket. Jorge Treviño, the Moyle family lawyer, is pushing for the appointment of a special investigator who could devote himself exclusively to this case.

Colin Barraclough  
Barraclough is a free-lance journalist who lives in London.

## APOCALYPSE NOW

### Waco and the Lure of Instant Books

On Monday, March 1, *Waco Tribune-Herald* reporter Mark England was on the biggest story of his life.

The story of David Koresh and the Branch Davidians — a subject England and reporter Darlene McCormick had been investigating for almost a year — was suddenly *New York Times* front-page material. The morning after the reporters’ series on the cult began, federal agents had stormed the Davidians’ compound, leaving behind four dead agents and fixing the eyes of the nation on the self-proclaimed Messiah. At the *Tribune-Herald*, the phones were ringing; reporters from faraway newspapers were pestering England for background as he was frantically trying to get the next day’s story together.

One phone call, however, stood out. The caller was all sugar-voiced and Hollywood-smooth: What a wonderful series you’ve done, the voice said. Wouldn’t you like to take the story further, get it out to a wider audience?

More calls like this — with a strikingly similar format — came in from movie producers, agents, and publishers. “I told them I was trying to write the story; I can’t take out the time to write a book,” England recalls. “This is not the time to be negotiating something.”

Yet in the following days, while agents from the FBI and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms were negotiating with cult leader Koresh, another kind of negotiating was going on outside Ranch Apocalypse. The race from fact to paperback, from real-life drama to reality-based melodrama, had begun. Publishers and producers were prowling for exclusive stories and writers to tell them — fast.

Journalists are a natural choice in the race to bring out a book or a movie on a major event. They are quick studies, trained to tune into human drama and pathos, and often come with sources and a store of knowledge. And, accus-



tomed to a slim paycheck, reporters may find the promise of quick money tempting.

Should they take it? Journalists in Waco had varying responses to this question.

“I didn’t realize at the time what the game was,” says the now somewhat jaded England in his soft Texas drawl. “It’s apparently not to do the best story possible, but to just get something out.... It’s questionable how much information you’d have [in a month] to do a good book. It would be tough to pull off.”

In all, in the first days after the siege began, England and McCormick received about thirty calls from producers and another five from book agents. One producer even flew out, in vain, to woo them; another proposed paying them \$50,000 to \$75,000. A week after the first call, the reporters hired a New York agent to handle the offers.

Then, ten days after the standoff began, by which time NBC had already begun to produce a TV movie, the requests virtually stopped. McCormick and England still want to write a book, they say, but one that is well thought-out. “It wasn’t a quickie story,” says McCormick, “so how could I write a quickie book?”

On March 4, the fifth day of the siege, at another office in Waco, book publish-





STEWART REECE/WACO TRIBUNE-HERALD

#### The Waco Tribune-Herald's McCormick and England

er Wayman Spence and former reporter Bob Darden were shooting the breeze about one of Darden's books for WRS Publishing when the conversation veered, inevitably, to David Koresh. It turned out that Darden, who teaches writing part-time at Baylor University in Waco, had researched the Davidians years before, and had even kicked around the idea of a book about them. In addition, he had easy access to thousands of pages of oral history and other documents on the Branch Davidians archived at Baylor. Means, material, motive — it was all there. "Let's get on it," Spence told his writer.

Darden, who had spent nine years with the *Waco Tribune-Herald* and produced eleven books, was known as a fast writer. Once the standoff began, his agent in Dallas got two other offers to do a fast book.

But Darden decided to stick with Spence as his publisher; after all, he says, Spence was the only one who didn't want his television and movie rights as well. Darden now has two other agents working on selling those rights. He is writing the book with a co-author, Brad Bailey — Darden for the historical background, Bailey for the events during the siege.

Still, Darden didn't like the idea of

doing a quickie book. "I'd like to follow every little lead, drag this out over a year," he says, adding that the book will be carefully footnoted and annotated. But other considerations won out in the end, including "base financial reasons. Nobody wanted to pay me to do one at a leisurely pace. Pretty crass, I guess."

Tim Madigan, a reporter at the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, hopes he has found a way to dovetail his interests with those of his instant-book publisher.

"Their thing was to be the first book," Madigan says. "My goal as a journalist was, given those ground rules, to write a good book."

Madigan had never heard of David Koresh until the ATF botched the raid on February 28. He spent the first three days of the standoff outside the compound, but soon left to return to his newspaper. A week later he was offered a book contract and he took a month's leave to report and write it. Madigan says he logged nearly sixty interviews, with Koresh's relatives, followers, and their families, including a four-hour interview with Koresh's grandmother. He couldn't reach Koresh's mother. "She'd sold her rights," he says.

He believes his book will help advance the story, rather than sensationalize it. "I was presented with this opportunity," Madigan says. "How it is perceived, I don't care."

By late spring, the race to publish first was tight. Former *Philadelphia Inquirer* reporter Clifford L. Linedecker's book (*Massacre at Waco, Texas: The Shocking Story of Cult Leader David Koresh and the Branch Davidians*) was published by St. Martin's Press on May 17. Madigan's book (*See No Evil: Blind Devotion and Bloodshed in David Koresh's Holy War*, published by the Summit Group, Fort Worth, Texas) came out in the same week. A book by former cult member Marc Breault, with Australian TV journalist Martin King (*Inside the Cult: A Member's Exclusive Chilling Account of Madness and Depravity in David Koresh's Compound*, published by Signet) appeared in June. Darden and his co-author (*Mad Man in Waco: The Complete Story of the Davidian Cult, David Koresh, and the Waco Massacre*, WRS Publishing) got the first three chapters to their editor by May, with a

publishing date of August 1.

Even the besieged cult leader had been negotiating with publishers for the rights to his autobiography. On April 7, five and a half weeks into the standoff, *The New York Times* reported that Koresh had authorized his Texas lawyer to hire two New York City lawyers, Kenneth Burrows and Michael Kennedy, to act as his literary agents. Days earlier, the lawyers had faxed a letter to publishers soliciting bids with a suggested minimum price tag of \$2.5 million for the rights to Koresh's life story.

Inside the compound, meanwhile, Koresh had begun to write something different, a manuscript about the *Book of Revelation*. Negotiators had promised him that he would be able to finish it later, in jail.

Courtenay Thompson

Thompson is an intern at the Detroit Free Press.

## DOCTORS AS REPORTERS

### A Check-up

For the past thirteen years the American Medical Association has hosted an annual Health Reporting Conference for physicians who also work as medical reporters, or aspire to. This year, with health care reform on the agenda of every newsroom in America, the conference, held in San Francisco, took on an extra dimension. And the very idea of having physicians report on health care topics came in for a check-up.

"Physicians ... who see themselves as journalists first bring more to the medical story than a reporter," says Tom Linden, who moderated a health care reform panel at the April conference and who was a staff writer for the *Los Angeles Times* before he went to medical school. Now he hosts *Physicians' Journal* on Lifetime Medical Television. "We [physicians] have spent five, ten, fifteen years studying the field of medicine," Linden adds, "and the more you know about the subject the better you can report on it."

It's those physician-reporters who

don't see themselves primarily as journalists, or who are not perceived that way by the public, who worry some news professionals.

Harry Fuller, news director of KPIX, the CBS affiliate in San Francisco, told a roomful of physician-reporters at the conference that, while "the M.D. label behind your name" adds weight and credibility, it suggests at the same time that you are an interested party, not an unbiased observer. For this reason, Fuller explained, he did not assign his medical reporter, Nancy Snyderman, M.D., a practicing physician (who is also the medical correspondent for ABC's *Good Morning America*), to stories that deal with doctors' income.

Larry J. Thompson, a founding editor of the health section of *The Washington Post* and, since January, a Washington correspondent for Whittle Communications' Medical News Network, says he was "horrified" and "outraged" when he heard Dean S. Edell, M.D., the medical reporter for KGO-TV in San Francisco and an anchor whose medical news programs are syndicated to about 100 U.S.



**At the AMA's annual Health Reporting Conference, physicians get tips on their on-air performance**

and Canadian markets, tell his audience at a conference panel on medical ethics that "it's [President] Clinton against the doctors" and that the media are a tool at the doctors' disposal.

"He used his position of authority to proselytize shamelessly," Thompson says of Edell. Thompson says it took him a while to understand such behavior. He concluded that physicians — including physician-reporters — tend to live in the

culture of physicians, and often fail to understand that as reporters they must try to see issues from other perspectives.

Instances of this kind of culture clash are likely to increase if the proliferation of medical shows on cable channels creates the demand for physician-reporters that some conference attendees expect.

Some physician-reporters seem immune to journalism's conflict-of-interest sensibility. For example, San Francisco stores display reading glasses with a photo and endorsement from KGO-TV's Edell. Local media exposure, of course, is also an effective way to help build a medical practice.

Physician-reporters, meanwhile, were being recruited by Healthvision, Inc., a Detroit-based medical communications company in Detroit, for its medical news program, *Second Opinion*. The TV show has aired on three NBC affiliate stations in Indiana, and company president Andrew Kokas has plans to go national. While Kokas accepts sponsorship from pharmaceutical manufacturers for his shows, he insists that the money comes with no strings — save one: "The string



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attached is that if the company is actively involved in cancer drugs, they're not providing funding for us to go out and do stories on heart attacks."

The AMA's San Francisco conference itself, meanwhile, was supported by an educational grant from Pfizer U.S. Pharmaceuticals Group, while the National Association of Physician Broadcasters' awards banquet and annual meeting, held in conjunction with the conference, was financed by a grant from the NutraSweet Company. The awards dinner program also acknowledges support from the Agricultural Group of Monsanto Animal Sciences Division and the Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association.

Karla Harby

Harby, a free-lance writer specializing in science and health, lives in Rockville Centre, New York.

## SOUND BITE

"It bothers me that *Time* and *Newsweek* are working furiously on selective binding which, they say, will target ads and, more importantly, edit pages to an individual house or a row of houses. It's personally disappointing to read a story and sort of slap your head and go, 'Wow! That was great!' And then realize that there are far fewer people slapping their head at the same time than there were last week because you're all getting a different story."

Patrick Reilly of *The Wall Street Journal*, at a First Amendment Leaders' breakfast sponsored by CJR.

## NEVER THE TWAIN?

### "Ossies" and "Wessies" in a German Newsroom

When a rich West German publisher buys an East German party organ, staff and all, office politics takes on a whole new meaning.

The *Mitteldeutsche Zeitung* in the blue-collar city of Halle, now one of unified Germany's top dailies, can count itself a success story. But in a year of economic disappointment in Germany, the dysfunctional side of this partnership is unmistakable, as it is in other formerly Communist newspapers there.

Until 1990, the *MZ* — in those days called *Freiheit* (Freedom) — was a propaganda sheet, fat with inspirational worker profiles and exhortations to greater productivity. Reporters were favored by their government sources with access to otherwise unattainable goods. Most "news" was planned weeks in advance; a "reporting error" might mean that the wrong section of a speech had been highlighted or that an official had been made to seem less important than he thought he was.

The paper struggled to hold the party line during the breathtaking final months of 1989, as thousands fled to the "class enemies" in the west and swelling crowds gathered each Monday for anticommunist candlelight vigils in Halle's market square. When Communist party reformers finally kicked out *Freiheit's* editor, three weeks after the Berlin Wall fell, and voted deputy editor Stefan Lehnebach into the top job, Lehnebach published a pledge to work for a better socialism. "But I already believed the system was doomed," he says.

Six weeks later, the editorial employees cut their ties with the party. Lehnebach and a colleague climbed into a Russian Lada with picnic baskets of food and spare tanks of gas (they had no deutschmarks) to scour the capitalist world for a buyer.

They found Cologne's DuMont

## SIGN LANGUAGE

If the graffiti marring the billboard below look just a little too nice, there's a reason. They are corporate graffiti, performed not by angry teenagers in the dead of night but commissioned by Florida's *Tallahassee Democrat* to call



attention to its redesign.

Back in January, the *Democrat* put up nine billboards, black and white and fairly dull, along main roads around Tallahassee, declaring that the paper was "An Important Part of Every Day," "A Good Paper," and so forth. In mid-March the billboards were "defaced" —

decorated with drawings of such things as toilet paper and fish, as in fish-wrapper. Then, in mid-April, on the day of the newly designed *Democrat's* debut, came a new set of billboards, declaring that — as if the graffiti had been the result of some public protest — "We can take a hint," and announcing the redesign.

If the campaign "got a lot of talk around town," as the newspaper's ad agency asserts, it also got some talk in the newsroom, where a number of journalists, who hadn't been told that the graffiti were part of their paper's campaign, read the message as a putdown of their work. "Most of us were not amused," says one reporter.

The redesign, however, is another matter; reporters and editors seem generally pleased. As executive editor Lou Heldman points out, the change in the *Democrat* is not merely a redesign, but a reader-driven drive for a more complete newspaper. Heldman says that, by the end of the year, the 59,000-circulation newspaper will have added six reporters and editors and thirty more pages of news.

Batya Grunfeld

Grunfeld was recently an intern at CJR.



Schauberg, a liberal publishing house that agreed to make capital investments and to keep all the employees who had not collaborated with Stasi, the notorious former East German police.

Since then, jackhammers and bulldozers have provided continuous background music at the paper, with a new \$140 million printing plant and renovations transforming the dilapidated offices. The news staff switched from typewriters to computers over the course of a weekend; the paper was expanded from eight pages to thirty-two with color; dozens of editors were sent west to Cologne for training at a Schauberg-owned sister newspaper.

DuMont changed the paper's name, but maintained *Freiheit's* twenty-three local bureaus and editions in an area of 2.8 million people. Meanwhile, the *MZ's* advantage as paper of record has allowed it to retain about 80 percent of its old circulation, despite a drop in the region's population — and despite a flood of complaints that the new, improved paper takes too long to read and has too many ads. Media experts give it high marks for depth and locally relevant coverage, and surveys show surprising strength among young readers. New features include a weekly advice section aimed at helping readers adjust to their life as citizens of the Bundesrepublik.

Still, three years after the paper began its new life, the upbeat mood has been replaced by an unease that mirrors the gloom in the industrial wasteland around Halle and elsewhere in the recession-plagued nation, where people from the east ("Ossies") and west ("Wessies") have grown apart. Unemployment in the *MZ's* readership area is estimated at 38 percent.

Knowing how lucky they are to have jobs, journalists of the old *Freiheit* crew work a lot harder than they did before, but, according to their western colleagues, they still are only about half as efficient as their Cologne counterparts. Late-breaking wire stories and local angles are repeatedly missed; a three-letter preposition is misspelled in a front-page headline; the Irish punt drops a dizzying 10 percent, a shock to the European currency grid, but none of the Ossies sees the news value and it goes unmentioned. "These guys figure Ireland is too far away to matter. They

## SOUND BITE

**"S**ensationalism, to me, is a brother to sentimentality. Sentimentality, basically, is expressing an emotion you don't feel. Sensationalism does the same thing, except it's expressing a horror you don't feel. [It] always ends up being bogus, and doesn't work."

Pete Hamill, columnist, writer, and, briefly, editor of the *New York Post*, addressing the American Society of Magazine Editors this spring.

.....

still don't get it," grumbles an editor from the west.

The collegial creative tension between the two co-editors-in-chief — one from the west and one from the east — has given way to tactical sparring by their partisans in news meetings. In private, Wessies gripe about a "coffee-klatzsch" attitude among the Ossies, who shrug off criticism and go right on doing what they do. The Ossies, for their part, are tired of being criticized by western colleagues, who, they say, are arrogant careerists and are too quick to judge a culture they didn't live and work in.

Behind it all lurk the old ideological differences and mistrust. "You still can't write what you believe here," says Jürgen Badstuebner, an Ossie features editor who accepts the failure of his socialist ideals but has limited enthusiasm for the new world order. Like Lehnebach, he believes that capitalism is based on unequal distribution of resources and the destruction of the environment, both of which threaten the future. "But if I wrote that," he says, "I'd instantly hear the accusation, 'Ach, there goes the old Red again!'"

"I don't want to be a censor, but we have to agree on economic fundamentals," says Dieter Jepsen-Föge, the Wessie half of the co-editing team. Jepsen-Föge is increasingly irked by articles that tend to appear in the local sections where some of the Ossie hardliners work. A recent piece began this way: "It's just another day in the market

economy: a woman is fired."

If there is one dependable human bridge across this gulf at the *MZ*, it is the younger reporters in the bureaus who grew up without illusions in the fading Communist world and are energetically honing their skills in the new one. They have the affection and trust of both sides, who see them as the hope of the future. But they are realistic about the years of difficulty ahead.

"I often feel caught between two fronts in a war, but I've made it clear I won't be drawn in," says Steffen Reichert, a twenty-four-year-old Communist-trained journalism school graduate and one-time youth brigade leader. "I just want to put out a good newspaper."

Elizabeth Moore

Moore, a reporter for the Tacoma Morning News Tribune, is in Germany this year on a fellowship from the Robert Bosch Foundation.

## RESOURCES

# A WINDOW ON HEALTH

One way to watch the health care industry is to watch the groups that watch it — from associations to stock experts to advocates. The hundreds of newsletters published annually by such groups can serve as an "interesting window," according to *The Washington Post's* Mary Pat Flaherty, who covered health stories as projects reporter for *The Pittsburgh Press*. "When the professionals are communicating to their own people, they talk about issues differently."

While some health reporters say that newsletters can lag behind the news, others, including the *Chicago Sun-Times's* Tom Brune, an investigative reporter who has covered the health industry, consider them a valuable resource. As a newspaper reporter, Brune says, "you have to look for the broader sweep, but to put the sweep in the proper perspective, you need the background information that newsletters can provide."



Below is a sampling of newsletters that Bruce, Flaherty, and health writers from a number of newspapers around the country look to for tips, background, and trends:

◆ **Capital Update** (American Nurses Association) 1-800-637-0323. Covers legislative and government actions and other topics related to nurses.

◆ **Pharmacy Today** (American Pharmaceutical Association) 202-628-4410. Focuses on government regulation of pharmacy issues and dispensing pharmacists, and reports on "developments at the FDA, in congressional and association committees, and in Medicaid." (Source: *Newsletters Directory*)

◆ **Biomedical Market Newsletter** 714-434-9700 or 1-800-875-8181. Discusses the manufacturing and marketing of equipment, devices, instruments, and diagnostic tests.

◆ **Consumer Reports on Health** 914-378-2000. (Consumers Union) Covers nutrition and fitness, preventive measures and new treatments, medical breakthroughs and medical hype, health frauds, and other critical issues. Health writer Linda Roach Monroe of *The Miami Herald* describes it as "reader friendly" and "succinct."

◆ **Contemporary Sexuality** 312-644-0828. (American Association of Sex Educators, Counselors, and Therapists) Reports on government decisions on sex education, AIDS, and related public issues.

◆ **Health Letter** 202-833-3000. (Public Citizen Health Research Group) Keeps watch on the FDA and the approval process for medical devices and drugs, evaluating whether testing, approval, and recalls are proceeding adequately. Features articles that critique advertising related to health issues, such as cigarette ads. "Flippant, funny, and political," according to *The Washington Post's* Flaherty.

◆ **Mayo Clinic Health Letter** 1-800-633-4567. Covers a broad range of health topics, such as diet, exercise, nutrition, medical ethics, and research findings on drugs. (Source: *ND*)

◆ **Medical Devices Bulletin** 301-443-5860. (Center for Devices and Radiological Health) Discusses the medical-devices programs of the Center, with references to FDA approvals on devices like cholesterol test kits.

◆ **Nutrition Action Healthletter** 202-332-9110. (Center for Science in the Public Interest) Gives "original" coverage of such topics as food and nutrition, exercise, vitamins, "the organic versus chemical farming controversy, and the implications of agribusiness." (Source: *ND*)

◆ **Tufts University Diet and Nutrition Letter** 1-800-274-7581. Provides "cutting-edge" coverage, says Marc Schogol, who

writes columns on health issues for *The Philadelphia Inquirer*.

Jean Garner

Garner was recently an intern at CJR.

## FOLLOW-UP

# CATCHING THE KILLERS

As "just about the only journalist in New York who covered the city's multibillion-dollar drug trade with any degree of detail or intimacy" (see "Dead Right," *CJR*, March/April 1993), investigative reporter Manuel de Dios Unanue knew his life was in danger. But he probably did not expect a death order from as far away as Colombia.

It appears, however, that de Dios — whose anti-drug reporting became famous in his days as a reporter for and finally editor-in-chief of the Spanish-language daily *El Diario/La Prensa* — was the victim of just such an order when he was shot to death on March 11,

1992. This May, a federal grand jury indicted three people in connection with de Dios's murder, in the process revealing a conspiracy that started in Colombia and culminated 3,000 miles away in a restaurant in Queens.

Authorities alleged that a powerful drug lord in the Colombian Cali cartel, José Santa Cruz Londoño, ordered the killing in response to de Dios's efforts to uncover the cartel's influence in Queens. *New York Newsday* reported that the impetus for Londoño's contract was a photograph de Dios had printed with one of his stories on cocaine trafficking. Londoño has not been indicted. But twenty-four-year-old Colombian John Mena was charged with arranging the murder; also indicted were the alleged gunman and the alleged getaway driver.

Authorities revealed that two of the indicted suspects were also implicated in the 1991 murder of two Baltimore businessmen. One of the men had conducted business with the Cali cartel, and the cartel reportedly believed he had skimmed money off the top of a multimillion-dollar deal.

Kristin Jensen

Jensen is an intern at *CJR*.

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## CAPITAL LETTER

# How to SATISFY A SPIN-STER EVERY TIME

BY CHRISTOPHER HANSON

All glory is fleeting, but the glory reserved for youthful p.r. operatives in American politics may be the most fleeting of all. Consider:

In its December 7, 1992, edition, *U.S. News & World Report* declared George Stephanopoulos to be "Clinton's boy wonder" and reported: "Just like the president he will serve ... Stephanopoulos has mastered the new rules of American politics." But in its June 7, 1993 edition, the newsmagazine reported that "At the tender age of 32, George Stephanopoulos already is a former boy wonder." He had abruptly been shunted aside, to make way for a new p.r. chief-tain, *U.S. News's* own David Gergen.

In a glowing November 30, 1992, piece by Margaret Carlson, *Time* magazine said Stephanopoulos "is one of the savviest communicators in the business." But on the day the White House shake-up was announced, Carlson observed on the *Inside Washington* program that "Anything's better than George." The pattern was much the same in other media.

Early this year, White House spokeswoman Dee Dee Myers enjoyed a run of exceptionally friendly press coverage. The *San Francisco Chronicle*

*Christopher Hanson is Washington correspondent for the Seattle Post-Intelligencer and a contributing editor to CJR. His approach in this article was inspired in part by Nora Ephron's 1975 essay, "How to Write a Newsmagazine Cover Story."*



REUTERS/GETTMANN

"Clinton's boy wonder"

*U.S. News & World Report* — December 7, 1992

deemed her a "political wunderkind ... tough, swift, smart, sassy, and thoroughly professional." *Vogue* (April 1993) ran a profile titled "Admiring Myers." And on April 1, *The Washington Post* ran an upbeat, largely laudatory 60-paragraph, 530-line, 3,140-word portrait of Myers. It depicted her as a young woman of true grit who "isn't going to take any stuff" from those nasty reporters peppering her with questions, whom she called "the beasts." The profile was a kind of Beast's ode to Beauty.

But within a few short weeks, reporters were raising questions about her competency, too — after the "Hair Force One" \$200 haircut fiasco and the much bigger p.r. disaster involving Clinton cronies seeking a piece of the White House press charter business.

During last year's campaign, reporters marveled at the achievements of such media consultants as Clinton's Mandy Grunwald, Paul Begala, and James Carville (THE DOUBLE FIDGET CAMPAIGN WHIZ, *The Washington Post*, January 23, 1992). But by the time of the White House staff shuffle, journalists' bad feelings were extending to consultants as well. *Newsweek* (June 7) reported that "Clinton's vaunted cadre of political consultants is also losing some of its luster.... Some staffers are bitter that they have managed to evade accountability." That same week *Time* magazine jabbed Carville, reporting that he had boasted after the election that the incoming



AP/WIDE WORLD

"Clinton's former boy wonder"

*U.S. News & World Report* — June 7, 1993

administration "didn't need the press anymore."

Didn't need the press? Carville seems to have lost sight of just what a good thing that he, Stephanopoulos, and some of the other aides and consultants had going: news organizations had actually been competing to play up to, and at times kiss the rings of, the very people who were being paid to manipulate them.

The resulting profiles were exceptionally self-abasing. They were also rather reckless, hailing the brilliance and super-competency of folks whose achievements tend to be mercurial, given the precarious nature of success in American politics.

Close textual study finds seven basic elements or unities in this school of reportage.

### 1. The profile should be presented from the point of view of the subject.

For instance, the *Post's* Myers profile begins with a view of the press from her side of the podium: "Tired, grumpy, cynical faces. New York subway rider faces. A collection of maws that won't stay filled.... By contrast, she's looking pretty smoothed-down and blown-dry these days." A September 20 profile of GOP soundbite queen Mary Matalin in *The Boston Globe* opens with the subject "riding herd in her 12th floor office" and quickly paints the world in her terms ("Matalin ... has said proudly that she has been politically incorrect ever since she can remember." Etc.)

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2. The article should quote friends, relatives, political allies, and admirers of the subject as extensively as possible. Myers profiles tend to quote her father ("She was always the peace finder") or sisters, as well as subordinates, who of course provide their own disinterested perspective ("She's very cool," says David Leavy, her assistant of one year," *Vogue*, April 1993). Stephanopoulos profiles rely heavily on his parents ("who say that George is not just a son, but a trusted friend," *People*; October 26). His mother, Nikki, has revealed to several reporters that, as children, George and his sister never played with toys but instead read newspapers and magazines. Bosses and co-workers can provide an almost infinite supply of this sort of comment as well.

Co-ethnics can also be tapped. For instance, George Savidis, p.r. chief of the American Hellenic Educational Progressive Association, the oldest Greek-American fraternal organization, had this to say about young Stephanopoulos: "George is every Greek mother-in-law's dream. He's also the modern embodiment of the Periclean ideal" (*The New York Times*, December 6, 1992).

3. The article should make the subject look good even as he or she is shown doing things that make reporters look bad. For instance, last September 28 *The Associated Press* ran a profile of Grunwald that included an insider account of how, in a tense staff meeting, she devised a one-liner to deflect the latest round of attacks on Clinton. She is quoted as saying in the meeting: "You know, Governor, it seems to me that the only two times you've been invited on *Nightline* was to talk about a woman you never slept with and a draft you never dodged." The AP goes on to report that Clinton used a variant of this barb on *Nightline* and "it became the sound bite of the night" — i.e., widely repeated in other media. The article makes no effort to assess the accuracy of the line.

Another example: on July 15, 1992, the *Los Angeles Times* reported, in a glowing profile of Stephanopoulos: "This spring, [he] played a key role in keeping several negative stories about Clinton out of major newspapers and off television, quietly calling editors and network executives to convince

them the stories in question were unfair or otherwise flawed." The piece begged the question of whether the stories were in fact unfair or flawed.

4. The writer must choose words carefully to play up the significance or political potency of the person under discussion. He or she can describe the subject, for instance, in terms of *heat* ("If George's IQ could be converted to Fahrenheit, the boy could boil water" — Carville on Stephanopoulos, *People*, October 26, 1992). Or, better yet, in terms of *heat and light* ("He has, at 31, leaped ahead of his elders to be at the red hot center of the Clinton universe.... This brooding, dark presence has a quiet authority. His power whisper makes people lean into him, like plants reaching toward the sun," *Time*, Stephanopoulos profile, November 30, 1992). Or perhaps in terms of other *forces of nature* ("Mary Matalin ... is engaged in a whirlwind of power phoning," *The Boston Globe*, September 20, 1992).

Another approach, which works only for some subjects, is to describe them in terms of *supernatural forces*. Profiles of Carville, for instance, have emphasized his ability to "spook" the opposition and described him as a "Svengali," as "breathing fire." They have told how, as election day nears, he resorts to wearing black woolen gloves, not changing his underwear, and practicing other forms of political voodoo; how his dark basement office/dwelling is known as "The Bat Cave"; how his opponents refer to him "in terms normally reserved for Satan" and how one compared him to Rasputin.

In reality, of course, nearly all operatives, including Stephanopoulos and Carville, have been involved in failed campaigns. They are not superhuman. But by the end of these profiles, we are convinced they could melt the polar ice cap or conjure votes from a cauldron. That's writing!

5. The profile should play up, and even exaggerate, the subject's admirable traits. For instance, the *Houston Chronicle* (May 24, 1992) made a point of Matalin's singular humor. For Matalin, the paper reported, "things get done in a 'nanosecond' ... her assistant Dave Carney is 'stud-muffin.'" (Are you in stitches?) *Time* (November 30) was among several news outlets to remark on Stephanopoulos'



This is a terribly  
important person  
I am writing about.  
That means I  
must be terribly  
important too

breathtaking humility: "It is hard to figure out how someone so self-effacing ended up where he is ... an intellect unencumbered by a comparable ego...." (Many of the White House reporters who were exposed to him regularly after the election soon took a revisionist view.)

**6. The article should acknowledge, but must play down, criticisms of the subject.** The *Post's* piece on Myers, for instance, acknowledges that some reporters have questioned whether she has enough access to Clinton. But it then rehabilitates her image, citing Carville's partner, Paul Begala. He argues that Clinton appreciates her humor, which "gives Myers her own distinctive bond with the president."

**7. The profile must help foster an intriguing personal legend about the subject that can be passed on in future articles as a kind of gift to posterity.** For instance, profiles of Stephanopoulos mention that he grew up as a preacher's son; frequently they work in how his experiences as a high school wrestler taught him about life. Myers profiles mention her "Brady Bunch" childhood in California and how she is called Dee Dee because a sister could not pronounce her name (or, in some versions of the yarn, could not pronounce the word "baby.")

Part of the enthralling lore passed on in such profiles should be about the subject's defying of conventions or bucking of tradition. In fact, judging by the literature, this seems to be an absolute requirement of the genre: the piece must emphasize that the subject is, say, a woman in a man's world (Grunwald,

Myers, Matalin, Bush campaign spokeswoman Torie Clarke), or a young person in an older person's world (all of the above plus Stephanopoulos), or an eccentric in a world of gray suits and bland personalities (Carville, Matalin, and Clarke who, "'Torrential' to aides — doesn't fit in the gray-haired Bush brigade," *USA Today*, August 19, 1992).

There must also be a kind of fable of sensitivity: however brazenly manipulative the political operative may appear on the surface, he or she must never come across as some cynical, callous image peddler but instead must be portrayed as having a genuine feeling for ordinary people. Thus, Carville is depicted keeping in touch with common folk by hanging out in Wal-Mart or (in some versions) Kmart stores; Myers consults her sister, Jo Jo, who is a hairdresser; Grunwald touches the public pulse by reading *People* and watching trash television; and Matalin never loses sight of her working-class steel-town beginnings.

Those are the seven principles for writing a fawning profile of a flack.

Now for the hard part: explaining why such acts of journalistic fellatio come to be performed in the first place. Several theories come to mind, some more satisfactory than others.

There is The Ideological Theory. Conservatives correctly point out that the ickiest, most sycophantic news treatment of this type during the 1992 campaign was mostly bestowed upon Democratic operatives. Conservatives see an ideological motive on the part of the liberal media. Their case, however, is easily overstated. It cannot adequately account for gushy profiles of Republicans Matalin, Clarke, and, in earlier election cycles, operatives like Margaret Tutwiler.

There is also The Access Theory, the idea that news organizations, as a matter of policy, order up pieces that flatter the flacks in order to get better treatment, juicier morsels of news from the president's table. That sounds plausible until you consider the less than adoring tone when White House reporters, who need access the most, confront the flacks in daily White House briefings. Consider this exchange during the May 5, 1993, briefing, as Myers introduced Don Steinberg, a new spokesman on

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foreign policy issues:

MYERS: He has a Masters in journalism from Columbia and, most importantly, he's a Dodgers fan. (Laughter.)

UNIDENTIFIED REPORTER: Our deepest sympathy. (Laughter.)

MYERS: That was the most important criteria in his coming here.

HELEN THOMAS: I think journalism was the most important, for a change.

MYERS: That's right. He has credibility, Helen, at least for the first fifteen minutes.

THOMAS: For a change.

MYERS: For a change.... (Laughter.)

More promising is The Insider Theory, the idea that these gushy profiles came to be because so many journalists are inclined to puff up the group that provides them with the insider's perspective they crave. Showing their editors and readers they can get "inside" is evidently such an intoxicating accomplishment for some reporters that they seem to suffer from diminished critical capacities once the door opens.

There may also be a special Insider incentive for hyping the younger flacks: the reporter can project himself or herself as being with it enough to operate inside a hip, stylish, sexy political subculture. This could help explain why reporters made so much of Stephanopoulos' resemblance to the rock star Sting (*Los Angeles Times*, July 15, 1992), and his "boyish features and *GQ* look [that] Clinton once described as 'angelic funk'" (Baltimore *Sun*, February 4, 1993). It may explain why *USA Today* (August 19, 1992) says of Torie Clarke: "her frosted short hair looks spikey in a punk rock kind of way. Hemlines on her chic skirts end inches above her knees"; and why *Time* (March 8, 1993) writes of Clinton's p.r. aides: "The median age had dropped from forty-five to about twenty-five. [They] have brought with them boom boxes, R.E.M. tapes, takeout food, cappuccino makers, and a dorm room energy."

(On the other hand, youth culture's downside was emphasized after Stephanopoulos took the fall. In a June 1 piece headlined THE WHITE HOUSE KIDDIE CORPS, *The Washington Post* posited the theory that Stephanopoulos had become "a symbol of everything that's wrong with Bill Clinton's presidency — which is regularly portrayed ... as callow, arrogant,

obsessed with image over substance.")

The Insider explanation has much to commend it, but is incomplete.

To it must be added The Great Person Theory, according to which journalists write at worshipful length about such people as Stephanopoulos because they think these operatives are *shaping history*; because they are convinced that, were it not for a Carville or a Grunwald, Governor Clinton might have lost the 1992 election. There are compelling reasons *not* to subscribe to such a view — underlying political currents generally are so strong that *any* competent team of operatives can exploit an advantageous tide. Even so, many journalists seem to take the Great Person approach. ("With the exception of the White House chief of staff, James A. Baker III, and the campaign chairman, Robert Teeter, Matalin may have more responsibility than any one for whether Bush wins or loses," *Boston Globe*, September 20, 1992). I suspect that a twisted sense of self-importance may drive some of this reporting — a belief that this is a terribly important person I am writing about, a person so terribly important that I am going to lavish thousands of words upon him, and one of his terribly important duties is pitching messages to reporters like me; that means I must be terribly important, too.

A similar narcissism may account for some of the more enthusiastic press commentary on Gergen's ascension, which, in my view, tended to inflate the potential good that one commentator/editor/image-monger could do for Clinton. Gergen, after all, tried and failed to restore the public standing of Richard Nixon and could not sell the voters on Gerald Ford.

But this last observation is probably too historical to be relevant: in the news business, after all, "reality" is a highly perishable thing — so much so that an entirely new crop must be grown every few months. That's a chore for journalists, to be sure. On the other hand, we don't have to worry much about linking the present with the past, and that is one of the real blessings of our profession. It gives us an enormous sense of "empowerment," to use a word much in vogue with the Clintonites, and a perpetual sense of discovery. Tomorrow is always a fresh new day. ♦

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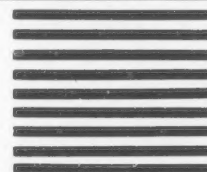
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# DARTS AND LAURELS

◆ **DART** to WBRC-TV, Birmingham, Alabama, and some forty other television stations around the country (including KATU, Portland, Oregon; WSB, Atlanta, Georgia; and WDAF, Kansas City, Missouri), for poisoning the news. The stations recently aired an alarming multipart series ("Deadly Heat," "The Silent Killer," "The Invisible Intruder," etc., etc.), which appeared to be a report on the insidious dangers of carbon monoxide leakage from faulty appliances in the home — but which was in fact a carefully engineered plug for an inexpensive (and, according to the Consumer Products Safety Division, largely ineffectual) carbon monoxide detector and for local suppliers who sponsored the newscast. The "Project CO" segments were developed with the help of a national marketing company which, in return for a \$500 licensing fee, provided practical suggestions for promotion, production, and graphics, along with the right to sell the \$2.99 device. "To become one of only three exclusive Project CO sponsors," ran a WBRC promotion, "you will need to invest a minimum of \$15,000 in airtime.... WBRC will air the series Project CO in the 5, 6, and 10 P.M. newscasts.... A WBRC News Anchor will display a Project CO kit during the Newscast and will mention your store name and location."

◆ **DART** to the Phoenixville, Pennsylvania, *Phoenix*, for failing to inform its left hand of what its right hand was doing. In a page-one story about the arrest of a local resident accused of sexually abusing his teenage daughter over a seven-year period that began when she was nine, the *Phoenix* piously noted not once, but twice, that it was withholding the name of the man to protect the identity of his children. Accompanying the story was a four-by-six-inch color photo of the family's house and a caption that placed it on sparsely populated "Riverwood Lane."

◆ **LAUREL** to *The New Yorker* and contributing writers Jane Mayer and Jill Abramson, for going behind the lines in a deadly war of words. Following a barrage of laudatory reviews of *The Real Anita Hill: The Untold Story* — a recently published book by investigative journalist David Brock that purports to be an unbiased inquiry into the Hill-Thomas confrontation — Mayer and Abramson closed in on Brock's purported facts. And, one by one, cutting through the camouflage, they picked them off — from the "independence" of a writer whose work was bankrolled by a foundation headed by the finance

chair of the Citizen's Committee to Confirm Clarence Thomas to the anonymity of sources of damning quotes about Hill's obsession with oral sex, from an absurdist theory of a cover-up in explaining away inconsistencies to a sweeping conclusion drawn from evidence that was far from exhaustive or complete. What with George Will in *Newsweek* trumpeting Brock's "avalanche of evidence" and Christopher Lehmann-Haupt in *The New York Times* saluting Brock for an "impressive investigative study" which "found Judge Thomas's testimony to be valid on every point while Professor Hill's was shot through with 'false statements,'" Abramson and Mayer's factfinding mission suggests that not a few reviewers of nonfiction books could use more time in basic training.

◆ **DART** to the Fort Lauderdale, Florida, *Sun-Sentinel*, for inventing a new kind of security beat. Presented with two more diagnosed cases of repetitive stress injury in its newsroom — this time, municipal reporter Sallie James and family issues reporter Berta Delgada — the paper assigned the two journalists to its suburban printing plant. There, bearing two-way radios in their splint-supported arms, they divided their time between the parking lot, watching out for thieves, and the roll storage warehouse, making sure that tractor trailer operators chocked their tires. (The wearing of the security guard uniform, however, was *not* required — except, that is, when the journalists were briefly assigned to the parking lot at the paper's main office.) As the manager of the loss-prevention department of the highly profitable, self-insured paper explained to dismayed staffers, such innovative practices have allowed the *Sun-Sentinel* to keep its workers' compensation payouts to a near-record low.

◆ **DART** to the Portland *Oregonian*, for professional tergiversation. Confronted last June with the news that a Northwest News Council was being formed as a one-year pilot project funded by the Society of Professional Journalists for the purpose of publicly resolving complaints of unfairness or inaccuracy against news organizations in the region, *Oregonian* editor William A. Hilliard bravely told *Editor & Publisher* magazine, "Personally, I have no objection to going along with it. I do not feel threatened by news councils." Confronted six months later with the news that a complaint had been brought against *The Oregonian*, Hilliard did a swift about-face, refusing to

go along with the hearing in any way. The complaint had been brought by one Harry Lonsdale, a candidate for U.S. Senate in the Democratic primary, who, in an editorial endorsing his opponent, had been accused by *The Oregonian* — with no supporting evidence — of having waged a “dishonest” campaign, and who had received no response to his several letters to the paper asking to know the basis of the charge that may well have cost him the 330 votes by which he lost. “Mr. Lonsdale has agreed to subject the honesty of his campaign to public scrutiny through the news council hearing process,” NNC executive director Oren Campbell wrote in a December 30 letter to Hilliard. “Certainly, you as a respected journalism professional should be willing to subject your decisions to public scrutiny, also.” Such logic notwithstanding, “[Hilliard] did not answer this letter,” Campbell reported to Lonsdale in a January 21 letter describing his frustration and regret. “I attempted to reach him by phone all week, but he did not return my calls. I can only conclude he hopes that, by ignoring the news council, we will go away. In this case, he is correct.”

◆ **DART** to the Lansing, Michigan, *State Journal*, for borrowing somebody else’s homework and handing it in as its own. On Wednesday, April 7, the *State News*, “Michigan State University’s Independent Voice,” revealed in a page-one story the names on the MSU presidential search committee’s long, long list; accompanying the report was a four-page, inside special “Guide to the Candidates” section that included background information on each of the 134 nominees. On Thursday, April 8, the *Lansing State Journal* accompanied its page-one story (PRESIDENTIAL SEARCH GOES ON DESPITE LEAK) with its own two-page “Guide to the Candidates” section that was suspiciously similar to that of the (uncredited) *State News*, down to typos and other minor mistakes.

◆ **DART** to WRGB-TV, in Schenectady, New York, for bait journalism. Fishing for footage for a sweepsweek follow-up to a New York State United Teachers’ report about the statewide lack of discipline in the schools, on April 29 reporter Judy Sanders positioned herself near the Hackett Middle School and, casting about for an assistant, hooked a thirteen-year-old girl. The child-reporter’s assignment: smuggle a videotape camera into the school and secretly record incidents of mischief and mayhem. As things turned out, however, the story got away: the camera was confiscated before it could be put to use (or put the kid at risk): school officials (and their lawyer) yelled loudly and long; the Albany Board of Education met to consider whether news director Neil Goldstein’s letter of apology was abject enough to warrant returning the cap-

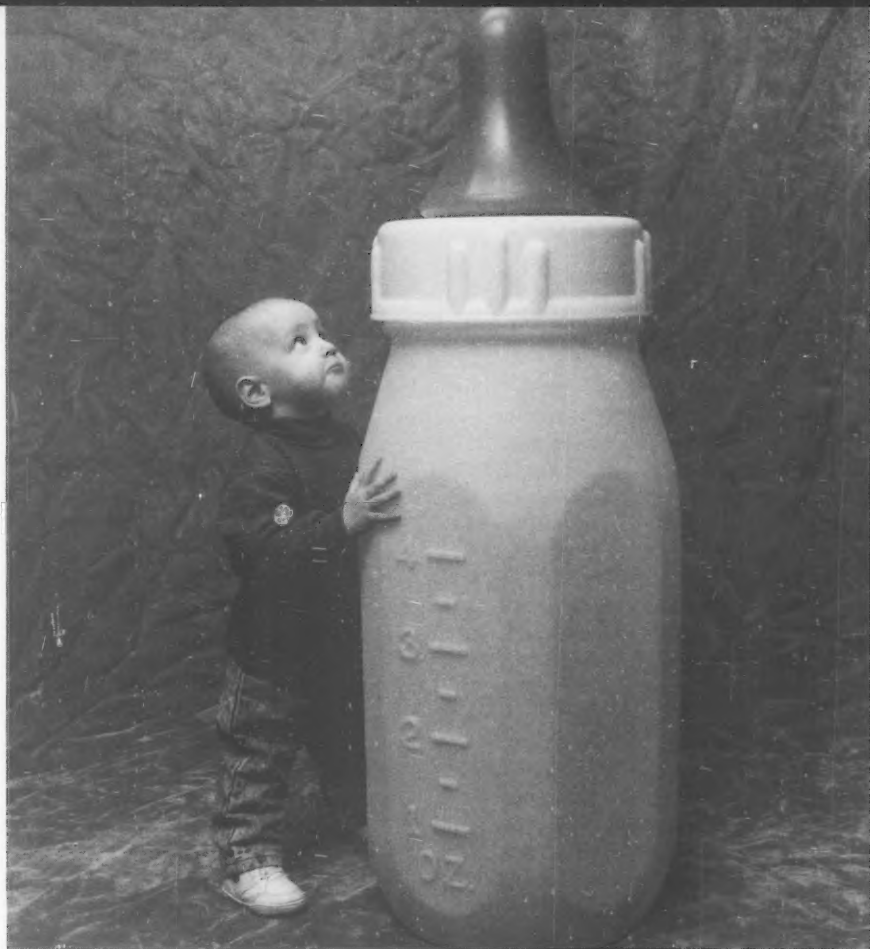
tured camera to the TV station; and reporters, editorialists, and columnists throughout the city — not to mention rival station WTEN-TV — had something of a field day on the undisciplined behavior of WRGB.

◆ **LAUREL** to Knight-Ridder Newspapers and defense reporter Mark Thompson, for a timely wake-up call. In a March 17 piece, Thompson set out the inner workings of a plan put forth by West Virginia Senator Robert Byrd — and approved by Congress — to build and install at a West Virginia naval base a \$7 million atomic clock that the Navy did not want or need. When the story first appeared, Byrd’s response ran somewhat slow; on April 15, however, three days after ABC’s *World News Tonight* chimed in with a remarkably similar (but uncredited) report, Byrd announced that he had stopped the clock.

◆ **DART** to the Del Rio, Texas, *News-Herald*, for a shameless show of nepotism in the news. When three employees were recently named assistant vice-president of the local bank, the paper announced two of the appointments in routine, one-paragraph items on the inside business page; the third, however, was deemed worthy of a red-ruled, four-by-six-inch, page-one box. Headed CONCHITA SAN MIGUEL ELECTED BANK AND TRUST ASSISTANT VICE PRESIDENT, the story described the new executive’s background, quoted a flowery tribute to her qualifications from the president of the bank, and noted, in closing, that she is married to the publisher and general manager of the Del Rio *News-Herald*.

◆ **DART** to the Fort Smith, Arkansas, *Times Record*, for cooking up a tasteless dish to set before its readers. In what appeared to be a *Times Record* headline over what claimed to be a “compiled from staff reports” story on what purported to be page one of an “Extra” *Times Record* edition slugged as an ad, the paper revealed that CLINTON’S GIRLFRIEND COMES TO FORT SMITH FOR COOKING SCHOOL [a “lifestyles” event at the paper-sponsored Home Show] — TICKETS GOING FAST; then, in thirteen salivating paragraphs went on to report on the “very serious relationship” that had developed in recent years between “Clinton” and the blonde cooking demonstrator (seen in an accompanying photo), a relationship uncooled by the fact that she had voted for Bush in 1992 or, for that matter, by “Clinton’s current marital and professional status.” Readers with the stomach to swallow such junk learned at the end of the five-column story that “Clinton’s girlfriend” and her boyfriend, one Clinton Streeter, of Horseshoe Lake, Arkansas, “definitely plan to be married this summer!” (Get it?)

*This column is compiled and written by Gloria Cooper, CJR’s managing editor, to whom nominations should be addressed.*



## SOME PRODUCTS JUST NEVER FIT THE CONSUMER

**Isn't it about time we built a health care system that fits the special needs of kids?**

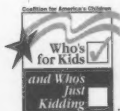
Children aren't just tiny adults. They come in a wider range of sizes than adults. This affects the medical supplies and medication children use. No parent would want a child to receive an injection with an adult-sized needle.

Children's care must reflect these differences. Hospitalized children require more nursing care than adults, as much as 39 percent more for children under 2. Often there are two patients — child and parent, again increasing costs.

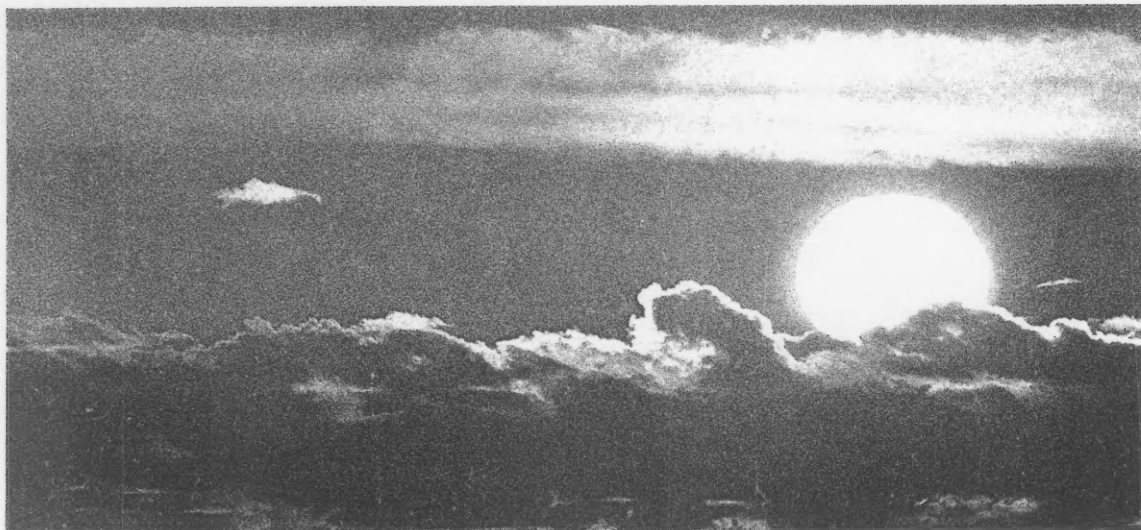
Cost containment. Managed competition. Managed care. Global budget caps. Each policy is

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C R E A T I V E E N E R G Y



# Truth, Lies, and Videotape

*PrimeTime Live* and the Hidden Camera

by Russ W. Baker



**T**hey're like Hugh Hefner's rabbits: by turns fluffy, then aggressive, then sexy, but always profitable — and multiplying. In 1969 there was one television newsmagazine — *60 Minutes*. By 1989, *20/20* and *48 Hours* had joined the nest. Though some succumbed to the cruelties of nature, today there are seven, with more on the way. By fall, ABC will have three, CBS three, and NBC two. Even Fox is getting in on the act, introducing *Front Page*, with correspondent Ron Reagan, the ex-president's son.

As the genre grows, each show seeks a distinguishing trait. For ABC's *PrimeTime Live*, the effort has proven wildly successful. Now finishing its fourth season, it is one of television's top-ranked shows, and likely to be with us to a ripe old age.

But it wasn't always that healthy. Despite voluminous hype, *PrimeTime Live* was practically born *PrimeTime Dead*. "It was supposed to be the second coming of broadcast news," recalls Eric Mink, TV critic for the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. "Instead, it was a laughingstock."

On August 3, 1989, *PrimeTime Live* debuted, emphasizing the "live" aspect: "Why did Thomas Root wind up on the ocean with a bullet wound? His first television interview, live. The American hostages in Lebanon: Can they be

**Sawyer during *PrimeTime's* "True Colors," an investigation of American racism**

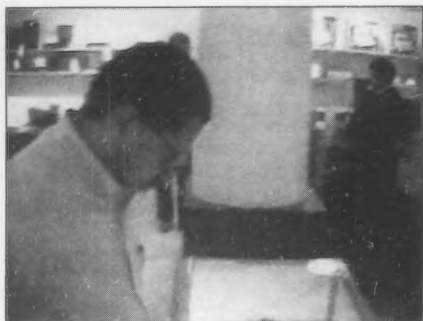
rescued? How do you punish their captors? Secretary of State Baker joins us live as military experts develop a plan." Plus: "Can men and women be just friends?... An electronic prison, worn on the body, monitored by computer, for one of the world's richest men. And Roseanne Barr, who says she's been dissected and critiqued, and she's ready to sound off.... Roseanne joins us live tonight."

The show tried to do too much. The anchors, Diane Sawyer and Sam Donaldson, wandered the studio, shoving mikes in the face of a live studio audience, facing the camera or each other, often sounding geeky, a bit like George Bush. Here's Donaldson on that first show: "Diane, going live without a script, you know, is exciting, but it's also a little scary. It's a little bit like Evel Knievel getting on his motorbike, trying to jump the Grand Canyon. If he makes it, it's terrific. If he doesn't make it, it's a long way down." Sawyer: "No parachutes here, no parachutes."

No one felt more like bailing out than Sawyer when a live remote from a playground on a later show revealed ... a playground, with nobody there. An interview with a Chinese student dissident fell apart on-air, under the weight of technical difficulties and language barriers. *Saturday Night Live* found the show an easy target.

More trouble: Diane and Sam just didn't seem to get along. Then again, everybody and Sam didn't seem to get along. And that live studio audience — well, this wasn't quite David Letterman.

Russ W. Baker is a free-lance writer who lives in New York.



Instead of canceling, ABC started shifting. The "live" aspect faded out. By 1990, Diane and Sam were separated, she to stay in New York, he back to his Washington turf. But it wasn't star management that did the trick.

Instead, *PrimeTime* concentrated on investigations, partly by exploiting a device most of its subjects can't see and wouldn't like if they could: a hidden camera. Under the direction of investigative whiz and senior producer Ira Rosen, a *60 Minutes* veteran, and prolific hidden-camera producers like Robbie Gordon, the show has gone seriously undercover.

We've watched from the inside of a refrigerator as dishonest repairmen did nothing for a lot of money, witnessed televangelists faking miracle cures, watched day-care workers slap their charges and crooked doctors line up to buy and sell fraudulent workers' compensation claimants.

Although *PrimeTime* is hardly the first television show to employ the technology, it airs more secret-camera episodes than any other TV newsmagazine. "They seem to want to use a hidden camera every week," says Esther Kartiganer, a senior editor who vets shows for *60 Minutes* and likes to keep an eye on the competition. Actually, over the past twelve months there have been eight such pieces, but each packs such a wallop that they stick in the viewer's mind. And the impact of *PrimeTime*'s hidden-camera work is likely to spur its competitors further into the act.

Television newsmagazines have an insatiable hunger for the kind of documentation that looks good on screen. Palatial homes, incriminating memos, revealing audiotape — these have always been the truffles of the producer on the hunt. But secretly recorded video, where the viewers see the action with their own eyes, may be the tastiest delicacy of all. (It is an expensive delicacy, however; *PrimeTime* often spends twice as much on such stories as on regular pieces, because of extra labor and research.)

The raw power of such clandestine filming was well demonstrated in *PrimeTime*'s November 1992 segment on racism, called "True Colors." The show sent out two investigators, one white and one black, and watched how they were treated. From the employment agency that was courteous to the white but lectured the black, to the employees at a drycleaner who told the black that all jobs in the shop were filled, then moments later said the opposite to the white, to the auto salesman who quoted the black a higher price and stiffer terms than the white on the identical car — the show was a powerful evocation of the stalled civil

rights march. By the time Diane Sawyer walked in and confronted the bigots, all they could do was sputter.

In the tradition of the *Chicago Sun-Times*, with its famed Mirage Bar sting of corrupt city inspectors (see "The Mirage Takes Shape," *CJR*, September/October 1979), *PrimeTime* set up a phony medical clinic in Los Angeles and filmed middlemen offering to supply doctors with patients whose ailments were bogus. The suppliers would get kickbacks; the doctors would collect on improper insurance claims. As the show made evident, rampant operations like this contribute to excessively high health care and insurance costs. The hard-hitting segment prompted California authorities to crack down.

*PrimeTime* has pointed a hidden camera into the London hotel room of Malawi's president, documenting the shopping binge of the leader of one of the world's poorest countries. It has shown Wichita students selling guns, Peruvians defrauding adoption-minded Americans by selling them unexportable babies, doctors who repeatedly misread mammograms, and a quadriplegic patient crying out amid filthy conditions at a veterans hospital, "Don't leave me, please! They're trying to kill me out there!" This April the show followed members of Congress to a lobbyist-funded vacation in Florida.

While *PrimeTime*'s reliance on this sexy but intrusive technology has not become a matter of public discussion, several aspects of hidden-camera journalism have triggered serious debate within ABC's walls.

"There's a certain general unease at ABC News on what constitutes misrepresenting who you are," says a news division veteran. All hidden-camera shoots for the show must be pre-approved by the network's news division, which in turn gets an okay from ABC's legal department (state laws vary greatly in their tolerance of the practice; Texas, for example, is relatively easy, while Illinois is tough). ABC is rewriting its guidelines on the technique, incorporating lessons learned in recent years. Meanwhile, they rely on the guidelines developed by the Society of Professional Journalists (see box, page 28).

Perhaps no story better illustrates the strengths and weaknesses of the medium than *PrimeTime*'s story on the Food Lion supermarket chain. On November 5, 1992, mil-



**In "True Colors," hidden cameras caught salesmen, landlords, and others treating a young, middle-class white man warmly and fairly, and a young, middle-class black man coldly and unfairly — over and over again. In "Food Lion," viewers saw employees of the chain rewrapping and redating old meat.**



lions of Americans watched through the lens of a well-camouflaged camera as store employees took old meat and chicken, then relabeled and sold it as fresh. Former employees from several stores talked of managers retrieving food from dumpsters and dipping putrid ham in bleach instead of discarding it — all to reach departmental profit levels.

The program, shades of Upton Sinclair's 1906 *The Jungle*, shocked an enormous audience and jolted an industry. Food Lion's stock dropped about 15 percent the next day. The company, which calls itself America's fastest-growing supermarket chain, with almost 1,000 stores throughout the South, is still struggling to turn around poor employee morale and worse public perceptions.

The Food Lion story began with a tip from the United Food and Commercial Workers Union (Food Lion is nonunion) and documentation by the Washington-based Government Accountability Project (GAP regularly supplies reporters with massive research from its staff, which includes attorneys and law student volunteers). *PrimeTime* followed up with some seventy interviews of Food Lion employees.

Scrambling for visuals, the show sent in a field producer, Lynne Nuefer Litt, to get the goods. Litt secured a job in the meat departments of two Food Lions in North Carolina and stayed two weeks — all it took to get the disturbing evidence.

The piece came out punching, with an interview with a woman from a Food Lion meat department: "I've seen my supervisor take chicken out of the bone can, make us wash it, and put it back out. And it was rotten."

Food Lion didn't exactly whimper. It launched a massive and aggressive p.r. effort, charging that *PrimeTime* had distorted the truth, exaggerated, and used manipulative, selective footage to back a pre-established point of view.

The company also filed a lawsuit, an odd one. Food Lion is asking the court to rule that undercover investigative reporting be actionable under the RICO (Racketeer-Influenced Corrupt Organization) statute. The case is pending, and the implications for the news industry, if any, are unclear.

Litt, the *PrimeTime* producer/Food Lion meat wrapper, was certainly undercover. She rigged references and wrote on her application: "I really miss working in a grocery store, and I love meat wrapping.... I would like to make a career with the company." She told a co-worker, Linda Anglin, who is about the same age and warmed quickly to her, that she had been recently divorced after ten

years of marriage, which was true, and had moved down to North Carolina for a change, which wasn't. She explained her abrupt departure by saying a grandfather had just died.

Television is not alone with the subterfuge issue — print reporters have been known to go undercover and to debate the ethical considerations (see "To Sting or Not To Sting," *CJR*, May/June 1991). Besides, as Janet Malcolm pointed out in her famous *New Yorker* essay, even plain old interview journalism can involve betrayal (see "Dangerous Liaisons," *CJR*, July/August 1989). But hidden-camera journalism is unique in that its very nature requires lies or, at least, a lack of candor — and that seems to make some print ethicists crazy. One was the syndicated *Washington Post* columnist Colman McCarthy, who once studied to be a Trappist monk. After sardonically calling the Food Lion segment "really bold journalism," he added: "It's possible to uncover the truth by being untruthful, but where do television newspeople secure the right to legitimize their deceptions? How about some truth-in-packaging as the program begins: 'We lied to get this story.'"

On the other hand, *60 Minutes* producer Don Hewitt contends that "People committing malfeasance don't have any right to privacy.... What are we saying — that Upton Sinclair shouldn't have smuggled his pencil in?"

However, Sinclair did not have to deal with television's thirst for pictures and its insistence on brevity, which sometimes means that context gets left on the cutting room floor. In one Food Lion sequence, Anglin is heard saying that she doesn't know how to clean the meat saw; the implication is that no one is bothering to maintain the equipment. But according to Anglin, *PrimeTime* didn't show the other part — in which she explains that she doesn't even do cleaning — it's not in her job description. In fact, Anglin says, it was Litt's job, and Litt had asked Anglin to stay late and help her. "She was fully aware that I didn't do that," Anglin says. "So she set me up on that one." On the other hand, Litt apparently hadn't been trained either, and never observed anyone cleaning the saw. *PrimeTime* seems to have made a fair point in an unfair manner.

This raises another question: Are the on-camera Food Lion workers victims or perpetrators? On the show, Sawyer declares that most of the Food Lion employees shown are hard workers, that *PrimeTime* meant no harm to them. "If so, they shouldn't even have showed our faces," says Anglin.

Sometimes the hidden pictures failed to prove any-



thing. At one point the narrator described workers relabeling old chicken, as *PrimeTime*'s reporting indeed indicated; but on close inspection, viewers would note that the supporting before-and-after shots were of different parts of a bird.

Yet in the final analysis, *PrimeTime*'s evidence appears sound, especially as it is supported by the Government Accountability Project's volumes of affidavits from Food Lion workers. Hence, the show did its job — successfully illustrating a serious problem.

Or at least a piece of it. It is hard not to wonder whether the tight focus of the hidden camera leads journalists further into a typical trap — zeroing in on a villain when the problem is systemic. *PrimeTime* clearly explained that Food Lion's harsh labor policies encouraged employees to cut corners. But while *PrimeTime* was focusing on Food Lion, Atlanta's WAGA-TV was in the midst of a six-week hidden-camera investigation that documented alleged violations in every one of the twenty metro Atlanta supermarkets it surveyed. Many were offering for sale meats more than two weeks after the original expiration date. The station found trouble at Bruno's, Ingles Markets, A&P, Big Star, Kroger, and Winn-Dixie.

Viewers of hidden-camera journalism serve as their own eyewitnesses. "Seeing is believing," says NBC field producer Bob Windrem, who spent a dozen years each in TV and print. "That's why television has higher credibility with the public than print."

Not that aiming a hidden camera at someone is inher-

### DECEPTION CHECKLIST

According to the Society of Professional Journalists, hidden cameras and other forms of misrepresentation should only be used

- ✓ When the information obtained is of profound importance. It must be of vital public interest, such as revealing great "system failure" at the top levels, or it must prevent profound harm to individuals.
- ✓ When all other alternatives for obtaining the same information have been exhausted.
- ✓ When the journalists involved are willing to disclose the nature of the deception and the reason for it.
- ✓ When the individuals involved and their news organization apply excellence, through outstanding craftsmanship as well as the commitment of time and funding needed to pursue the story fully.
- ✓ When the harm prevented by the information revealed through deception outweighs any harm caused by the act of deception.
- ✓ When the journalists involved have conducted a meaningful, collaborative, and deliberative decisionmaking process.

The guidelines go on to discuss reporter safety and the uncomfortable reality of hypocrisy, concluding with criteria that *do not* justify deception:

- ✓ Winning a prize
- ✓ Beating the competition.
- ✓ Getting the story with less expense of time and resources.
- ✓ Doing it because "the others already did it."
- ✓ The subjects of the story are themselves unethical.

ently worthwhile. For example, take this fairly recent *PrimeTime* promo: "Coming up: Is fraud in the cards? Behind the scenes of a tele-psycho scam, when *PrimeTime* continues." Given that standard, one might imagine another piece — with *PrimeTime* itself as a target: "Coming up: A dressing down at *PrimeTime Live*!" The subject: tensions between Sam and Diane, Diane and executive producer Rick Kaplan, and Kaplan and ABC News president Rooney Arledge, widely reported in the press. Might we one day see *Hard Copy* airing secret footage of Arledge arguing with Kaplan in a mid-show call, as he did on April 29 while *PrimeTime* rolled a hard-hitting piece about congressmen frolicking on Captiva Island, courtesy of electronics industry lobbyists? Donaldson himself had received speaking fees from the same lobbyists and, according to *The Washington Post*, Arledge, over Kaplan's objection, angrily demanded a fuller on-air disclosure.

Clearly, a thin line separates substantive footage from voyeurism. Watching someone do virtually anything without their knowing can be titillating. Daydreaming on the job, licking an envelope while looking around nervously — innocent acts can seem dubious, even nefarious. Practitioners know this. "It's no secret to anyone that this hidden-camera stuff intrigues the viewers," says Kelly Ogle, investigative reporter at KWTW, a CBS affiliate in Oklahoma City. "They like to see people doing things when they don't know they're being watched."

Some veteran producers argue that hidden-camera journalism can be a sort of souped-up event, a contrivance that with too frequent use will make their craft look cheesy. Don Hewitt, for one, uses it only occasionally. "Taste and integrity and ethics — a lot of things go into this," he says. *60 Minutes* employed a hidden camera in preparing its much-acclaimed piece on how the U.S. government encourages U.S. firms to export jobs to Latin America. But, says Hewitt, "I cut out all the hidden-camera stuff — it would have looked like we were doing it for the sake of doing it."

However, the tabloid TV shows, less tortured over philosophical issues and desperate to supply five days a week of shockers, have taken eagerly to the practice. Local stations, too, are shooting away with this equipment, sometimes swatting flies with sledgehammers. KWTW bought a minicamera early this year and immediately used it to show minors buying beer at a hockey game. New York's WNBC smuggled one into a coffee shop meeting of an alleged pedophile group, the North American Man/Boy Love Association.

While a hidden camera in the locker room, the boiler room, or the conference room can be a powerful journalistic implement — witness *PrimeTime*'s exposés on everything from crooked mechanics to racism — it can cheapen the craft when misused. Abuse could also lead to calls for regulation.

What *PrimeTime Live* is wrestling with, and what an increasing number of TV journalists are likely to confront, are questions that boil down to this: Where is the threshold? When does investigating become spying? And is spying always wrong? ♦



# Before the Shooting Begins



Hunter speaking at the CJR conference

Last summer Pat Buchanan announced to the Republican National Convention that "there is a religious war going on for the soul of America." Others have called it a culture war — a term that has been variously defined to encompass conflicts over such issues as freedom of expression versus community standards, the right to an abortion versus the rights of the fetus, and the rights of homosexuals, and, on the local level, skirmishes over school curricula.

On May 7, CJR hosted a conference titled "Covering the Culture War" to raise — and, if possible, come up with answers to — a number of questions. Among them: How serious is this war? Who's covering it? Who should be covering it? Can we cover it fairly — and how?

A week later, Buchanan held a conference titled "Winning the Culture War," attended by more than 300 followers of his newly formed organization, *The American Cause*. Who covered it? Not *The Washington Post*. Not *The New York Times*. (*Newsday* did, and *The Christian Science Monitor*.)

The following articles, comments, and Resource Guide are adapted from presentations at the CJR conference, which was funded by the Nathan Cummings Foundation, with additional support from the Saul and Janice Poliak Center for the Study of First Amendment Issues.

by James Davison Hunter

We are inclined toward skepticism. When asked to reflect on the conflict over various cultural issues raging today — funding for the arts, prayer at school commencements and football rallies, gender-specific language — many journalists (and academics) are inclined to dismiss them as simply the "politics of distraction." The real issues, they say, are unemployment, national debt, trade policy, and so on. But are those cultural issues really just distractions? Though Republicans trivialized the matter last year during their convention by invoking the term as a new political slogan, there is in fact a culture war under way in American society — a conflict far more consequential than most politicians and, I daresay, journalists and academics have supposed.

Our first clue as to its importance is that we find a deeper conflict *underneath* the various and changing shibboleths of public discourse. Last year's tiff over Murphy Brown is just an artifact of a deeper dispute over the nature and structure of the American family. The conflict over affirmative action is not just the politics of race but a contention over the standards of justice by which we will live. Even the quarrel over the accomplishments of Christopher Columbus — great explorer or contemptible exploiter — is a debate over the American legacy and whether that

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*The press can play a mediating role in the culture war by checking out the facts. If you uncritically report the assertions and slogans, which can include demonstrable lies, you simply perpetuate a problem.*

**CHIP BERLET**

Analyst at Political Research Associates, Cambridge, Massachusetts

legacy should be a cause for celebration or a source of shame. And on it goes through a long list of contemporary controversies: abortion, gays in the military, AIDS policy, sexual harassment, euthanasia, the composition of the Supreme Court, debates about freedom of expression versus community standards, church-state issues, and so on. Cumulatively, these disputes amount to a fundamental struggle over the "first principles" of how we will order our life together. It is through these seemingly disparate issues that we struggle to define ourselves as Americans and the kind of communities we will build and sustain.

These headliner issues, then, are anything but mere distractions. At stake are competing non-negotiable claims about how public life ought to be ordered; these claims emerge out of our ultimate beliefs and commitments, our most cherished sense of what is right, true, and good, and they are directly linked to competing ideals of national identity. (Sound like Bosnia? Northern Ireland? Lebanon?) In this situation, tension, conflict, and, before it is all over, perhaps even violence are inevitable.

Violence? The suggestion that violence can occur is not made lightly: *culture wars always precede shooting wars*. It is culture, after all, that justifies the use of violence. Indeed, we remember that the last time this country "debated" the issues of human life, personhood, liberty, and the rights of citizenship all together, the result was the bloodiest war ever to take place on this continent — the Civil War. We are truly in the midst of a culture war of great social and historical consequence.

The question I want to raise, and suggest journalists begin to grapple with, is whether American democracy can face up to conflict of this subtlety and significance and potential volatility. Can democratic practice today mediate our differences, or will one side, through the tactics of power politics, simply impose its vision on all others?

The question is not an idle one, because cultural conflict is inherently anti-democratic. It is anti-democratic first because the weapons of such warfare are reality definitions that presuppose from the outset the illegitimacy of the opposition and the opposition's claims. This is seen when claims are posited as fundamental rights that transcend democratic process. The right to have an abortion and the right to life, for example, are both put forward as fundamental rights that transcend democratic deliberation. Similarly opposing claims are made on behalf of gay rights, women's rights, the rights of the terminally ill, and so on.

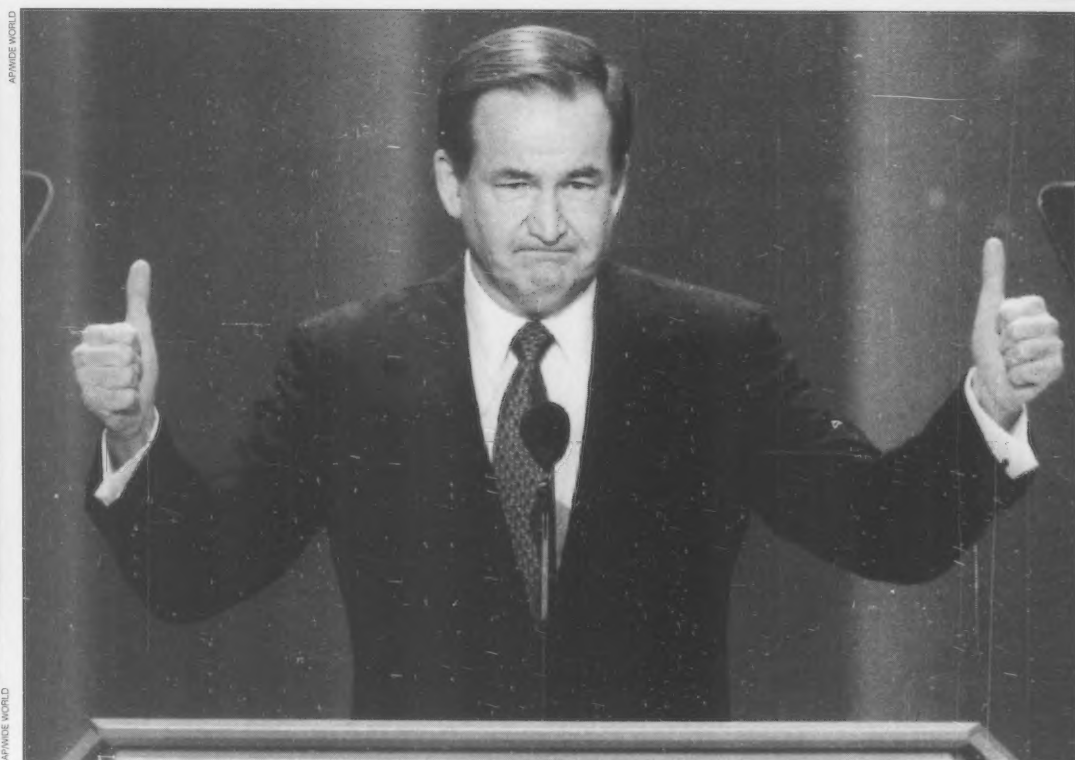
I would contend that if the culture war is really a war over first principles of how we will order our lives together, then the only just and democratic way beyond the culture war is *through* it —



by facing up to the perplexing, messy, and seemingly endless task of working through what kind of people we are and what kind of communities we will live in. This means that we have to face up to our deepest differences through serious, substantive, and civil argument.

Here, of course, political theory leads us to the institutions of civil society — schools, churches and synagogues, professional associations, and, not least, the press. Without these institutions the very idea of serious, substantive, and civil argument becomes a joke. These are the institutions that make democracy work, for they stand in between the individual and the state, mediating controversy and equipping the citizenry for "enlightened" engagement in public affairs — at least in principle. Of the press, Thomas Jefferson himself argued that it was "the best instrument for enlightening the mind of man, and improving him as a rational, moral, and social being." Journalists are not being boastful to agree.

Has the press taken sides in the contemporary culture war? The answer invariably depends on who is doing the criticizing. A far greater problem, in my view, is superficiality — the failure, or perhaps the inability, to explore the deeper issues and implications of the various controversies of the culture war. On abortion, for example, one must look very hard to find any discussion of what leads abortion



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providers to risk their lives to end unwanted pregnancies and anti-abortion protesters to risk jail sentences to protect life in the womb. Similarly, with regard to homosexuality, one would be hard pressed to find any discussion exploring the important distinctions between orientation, behavior, social movement, and public policy and the different ways ordinary Americans, politicians, and the military leadership think about each of these. So, too, the debates over the role of religion and religious institutions in public life and the implications of different (and legitimate) interpretations of the First Amendment are, for all practical purposes, nonexistent. In other areas as well — education, the arts, family values and policy, and so on — the complexity of issues is largely ignored or, at best, given only cursory treatment.

There are at least five interrelated factors that contribute to this.

The first factor is a predisposition to dichotomize the subject. Newspapers, radio, and television have long been dramatic media. The narrative structure of most journalism depends in large part upon the interplay of antagonists and protagonists, heroes and villains, victims and victimizers, and so on. Conflict involving competing interest groups, highly visible litigation, and inflamed partisan rhetoric obviously plays to this predisposition. Yet it is partly in the failure to listen to voices that don't fit neatly in the grid of

rhetorical extremes — the voices of scholars, of people genuinely and thoughtfully ambivalent, and of people whose otherwise ordinary lives have been caught up in public dispute — that public discourse becomes more polarized than we as a nation are.

A second factor is the tendency to reduce controversy to the struggle for power. Cultural disputes obviously develop a political dimension, but journalists tend to frame everything in terms of the question, Who has power and who doesn't? When the cultural, moral, and aesthetic dimensions of controversy are ignored or overlooked in favor of the legal or political, public sensibilities and expectations cannot help but be framed by the zero-sum logic of winners and losers. We come to imagine that what divides us can be addressed merely through administrative manipulation or technical innovation. This renders the possibility of serious, substantive argument even more difficult.

A third factor, related to the first two, is the commercial pressure to make news reporting competitive with prime-time entertainment. The point need not be belabored, but clearly ratings, market share, and advertising dollars create tremendous pressure to substitute style for substance in news reporting. As Eric Sevareid reflected a decade ago about the decline of CBS News, the trouble began when the news organizations began to turn a profit. ("People forget," he said, "that television

**Conservative columnist Patrick Buchanan (above right), and the Rev. Pat Robertson at the 1992 Republican National Convention**

*Journalists should take care not to attack the faith of the religious right, but to attack the fictions. Even then, many will regard journalists as enemies of the religious right, but at least they can still call themselves friends of the truth.*

**PAUL K. MCMASTERS**  
Executive Director, The Freedom Forum First Amendment Center at Vanderbilt University

Perhaps the greatest of the human virtues a reporter following today's cultural conflicts could have is the virtue of empathy, which is the virtue of classical cultural anthropology. I don't think that a reporter should have any higher goal than rendering all that humanity out there humanly understandable. That's not all it takes to contribute to the culture of a democracy, but it is an indispensable contribution.

**DONALD SHRIVER**

President emeritus and William E. Dodge professor of applied Christianity, Union Theological Seminary; and senior Fellow, the Freedom Forum Media Studies Center

news started out as a loss leader.") MTV's entrée into political reporting only accelerates this trend. As MTV becomes "a full-service network," as officials plan, even the new and improved forms of infotainment that exist in the major networks today will increasingly look like dinosaurs. Print media, and newspapers in particular, are not exempt from these pressures either, as *USA Today* and the competition it represents illustrate.

A fourth factor is the news "beat" itself, a euphemism for journalistic specialization. The increasing specialization of tasks is commonplace in all work and professions in the modern world, but it has particular consequences in covering the culture war. The problem here is that most of the controversies associated with today's culture war typically involve several layers of meaning. The conflict over the funding priorities of the National Endowment for the Arts, for example, does not fit neatly into any particular beat. It isn't arts reporting or religion reporting or legal reporting or even political reporting, strictly speaking, but a curious amalgam of all of these. Getting to the heart of the issue requires multiple competencies. My intuition is that most journalists, living with a deadline and not wanting to make mistakes, simply fall back on what they know. More often than not, this means a reporting of the dynamics of power politics in the situation.

A fifth factor is the culture of the newsroom. In sociology it is a commonplace that one's location in the social world fundamentally shapes one's world view. It is no different with the news media. The disproportionately white, middle- and upper-middle class, highly educated background of most journalists is fertile soil for a liberal world view, and this cannot help but influence their framing of issues. Let me be clear. I would affirm the sincerity of journalists in their trade — their lack of conscious bias, their effort to be fair. I would also affirm the ability of journalists to transcend their class culture. The problem, as I see it, is not one of bias but one of "tone-deafness" born of class/culture predispositions. What this means is that a good many journalists are simply unfamiliar with the experiences and subtleties of meaning that people outside of elite, urban culture impute to their lives. The recent observation of a *Washington Post* reporter that evangelical Christians are "largely poor, uneducated, and easy to command" is just one illustration of this brand of ethnocentrism. The recent calamity in Waco, Texas, is a more disastrous illustration of the same thing. As Neal Stephenson, writing on the op-ed page of *The New York Times*, put it, "No three cultures could be more mutually incomprehensible than the trinity at Waco: Branch Davidians, G-men, and the media." Both examples illustrate the need for a broadening and deepening of our understanding.

Clearly, some organizations and some journalists have demonstrated admirable feats of fairness, as well as serious, thoughtful, and probing reporting. But the structural pressures toward superficiality are beyond doubt. Carl Bernstein has written that "the really significant trends in journalism have not been toward a commitment to the best and most complex obtainable version of the truth, [and] not toward building a new journalism based on serious, thoughtful reporting."

Bernstein is not alone in his view that journalism has rarely gone beyond the surface. Peter Steinfels of *The New York Times* has made a similar case, adding, "If, in fact, the public debate is a lousy debate, is it sufficient for the media to cover that lousy debate fairly? If we thought of a question like nuclear waste and we found out that both sides of that issue were simply shouting at each other, repeating the same things, would we as reporters want to explore some of the aspects of the nuclear waste issue beyond those making their voice heard publicly? Are there critical aspects of [controversy] that we do not cover because they are not well represented in the public manifestations of the loud voices?" The point is well taken.

Neither people nor institutions are perfect. But the issues of the culture war are enormously sensitive, complex, and contentious, and precisely because of that, the institutions of civil society, not least the press, bear a particular burden to mediate the controversy carefully, even if not entirely fairly. Far too often they have not done so. Rather than penetrate the distortions, they perpetuate them, reinforcing the dominant ideologies and factions. In this sense, rather than protecting individuals from special interests, as Jefferson hoped, the media often become de facto special interest groups themselves.

The idea that civil society — and the press in particular — could inform the citizenry far better than it does presently sounds idealistic and academic until we consider the options. One option is "shallow democracy," in which public discourse is little more than a veneer for power politics. The other option is "substantive democracy." Here the search is not for the middle ground of compromise, but for the common ground in which rational and moral suasion regarding the basic values and issues of society are our first and last means to engage each other. Without a journalistic establishment capable of going beneath the superficiality that too frequently characterizes public discourse concerning the culture war, there is little chance of substantive democracy being renewed. In this situation, journalism will be part of the problem rather than part of the solution, and resolution, of the conflicts that divide us.



# The "Religious Right" and the Pagan Press

by Laurence I. Barrett

Not long ago, while talking with me about the formative days of the conservative Christian political movement, Morton Blackwell observed, "A lot of organizing in the late 1970s was simply not visible to the media." Why? "Because," he replied, "you guys don't go to church, for one thing."

Blackwell, a Republican National Committee member and a skilled election mechanic, could have added salt to the abrasion by pointing out that the "guys" — political correspondents for larger news organizations — rarely tune into religious broadcasting. Nor do we often read literature put out by the Southern Baptist Convention, the Christian Coalition, or allied groups. All that is foreign to our life-styles and values.

This is one reason coverage of a movement that found initial focus in Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority and has since broadened into a major political force and sociological phenomenon tends to be shallow and uninformed.

Because much of the movement's rhetoric and many specific goals strike us as extreme, we overlook instances in which popular sentiment — as measured by our own polls — agrees with the conservative view. Though the movement has significant internal differences, we tend to depict it as monolithic. Even vocabulary can be a problem. For the sake of convenience (ours), we use the label "religious right." Many in the coalition prefer "pro-family conservatives." In both literal and metaphorical terms, we still don't go to church.

Another factor: while the several factions comprising the religious right make big news, it is not an established beat. Religion specialists typically write about doctrinal disputes or trends. Education reporters usually handle another front of the culture war — the increasingly virulent fights in local school districts over curriculum. When the battle centers on elections or national policy — Pat Robertson's presidential candidacy or last year's mud-wrestle over the Republican platform — edi-

tors field their political reporters.

This division of labor follows a traditional pattern. But it deflects us from looking at this interlocked set of disputes as a complex whole.

A much larger problem is the cultural chasm dividing most national political writers and editors from the roughly 20 percent of the population that constitutes the core of the white, conservative, evangelical movement.

Several studies have shown that we journalists are not a very pious lot. Just as important, those of us who *do* attend religious services go to mainstream institutions. Five years ago, an innovative survey by the Williamsburg Charter Foundation analyzed religious practices of various groups in society. Among the "media elite," the study found exactly zero practitioners professing to be fundamentalist, born-again, or evangelical.

The born-again newsies I've known during thirty-five years in the business have been very few in number and very quiet about their affiliation. In the fourteen years during which I've made periodic forays into religious right territory, I've encountered only a couple of conservative Christians from large news organizations patrolling that turf.

Newspapers, magazines, and networks frequently assign African-Americans to cover civil rights stories and related issues. Women journalists of liberal bent often write about feminist concerns. Even if we had more conservative evangelicals in the ranks, I doubt if they would be employed the way blacks and women have been. Conservative Christians are politically suspect.

After all, their agenda includes boycotting publications and TV shows they find objectionable, banning abortion, censoring ostensibly liberal textbooks, locking gays in the closet and feminists in the kitchen, and elevating creationism to legitimate academic science. For the overwhelming majority of mainstream journalists, particularly in the Bos-Wash axis, this is frightening stuff. It is a platform to be attacked and debunked rather than understood and analyzed.

These questions were much on my mind last December and January while I traveled in the South and the Pacific Northwest, taking a new look at what drives religious right activists. I had been



*I would hate to see the task of empathy erasing what is to me one of the great tasks of the press, which is muckraking. I count on the press to tell me what I can't find out for myself, not about the human soul, but about city hall and other political and cultural agencies. I count on the press to be my spy, as it were, and to come back not just with tales that come out of the human soul, but tales of decisions made behind closed doors.*

**CATHERINE R. STIMPSON**

University Professor at Rutgers; founding editor of *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*; and author of *Where the Meanings Are*

Laurence I. Barrett, based in Washington, D.C., covers politics for *Time* magazine.

*The difficulty that we have as a culture in dealing with religion and politics is profound, because it goes to the very definition of who we are as a society. We have deliberately sidelined concern about religion as it relates, for example, to qualifications for public office. And we have done so for good reason: we know that religion can divide people and that, in the public square and in public policy, if you pit one God against another, you end up with religious warfare.*

*Meanwhile, one of the structural problems that needs to be overcome in order to come to grips with any of these questions is that political reporters don't understand religion, religion reporters don't understand politics, and art reporters don't understand either.*

**FREDERICK CLARKSON**

Author of *The Politics of Christian Reconstructionism* and co-author, with Skipp Porteous, of *Challenging the Christian Right: The Activist's Handbook*

following their story since 1979, the year Falwell launched his Moral Majority. Later, I covered different incarnations of the movement, manifested in Ronald Reagan's campaigns, the Robertson candidacy, and the GOP's holy wars last year.

One change over the years was striking. In the 1970s, local pastors and ordinary folks in the pews certainly viewed an unchurched visitor like me as an alien, but at the same time they treated me as an asset. I was someone who might tell their story to a large, distant audience. By last year the mood had turned frigid.

Anti-press preachments by the movement's national leaders partly account for the change. That line filters down to the rank and file. Ordinary evangelicals resent being described as fringe extremists when at least some of their demands appeal to other Americans.

While observing an intra-party Republican contest in Snohomish County, north of Seattle, I was approached by several partisans of the religious right slate, which was being unseated by a more moderate ticket. In separate conversations, all made the same request: please don't describe us as weird extremists; we're simply trying to protect our traditions and families.

In Oconee County, South Carolina, I wanted to talk with a parents' group that had besieged the local school system in a curriculum dispute. What should have been a routine transaction turned into a delicate negotiation. After several phone exchanges, the group's spokeswoman, Melanie Johnson, allowed that "we're praying over it" — "it" being my request for a face-to-face meeting.

Why the need for deep deliberation? Because, she explained, the press usually doesn't report what we say, only what it *thinks* about what we say. The meeting finally did take place, once I had established that I understood their vocabulary and genuinely wanted to hear their side of the dispute.

From that conversation and others like it, I came away with a disturbing impression: one reason for the deepening alienation of religious conservatives is that they've just about tuned out the mainstream media. A businessman I encountered at a Christian Coalition meeting in Columbia, South Carolina, spoke for many in the crowd when he told me that he felt the need to "cleanse" himself after watching network news. Now he depends almost entirely on Pat Robertson's *700 Club* and religious right literature for basic information.

Another example of the profound disconnect between the press and the religious right turned up in a February 1 *Washington Post* story. Reporting on the campaign by Falwell, Robertson, and others to prevent gays from serving in the military, the article described the evangelical rank-and-file as "followers [who] are largely poor, uneducated, and easy to command." The assertion appeared,

not in an analysis or opinion piece, but in a page-one news story.

That obsolete stereotype detonated loud criticism. In fact, the movement contains many affluent professionals and business proprietors, which helps explain why it is well financed. The *Post* immediately ran an apology in the form of a correction. Then the paper's ombudsman, Joann Byrd, devoted her Sunday column to the incident. She decried "blindspots in writing and editing that result from either distance or stereotypical thinking." She also noted that "several able editors" had read the story before it went to press.

Presumably, those editors would have instantly pounced on a passage linking blacks, chicken bones, and watermelons. They would have excised instantly sentences equating Jews with avarice or questioning the femininity of feminists. We've trained ourselves, albeit grudgingly, to be biased against bias — most of the time.

Besides, Jews have been plentiful in newsrooms for half a century or more; blacks and women arrived more recently. While integration of these and other groups hasn't always been smooth, we now know each other. Whether we would be more sensitive to — and knowledgeable about — the concerns of conservative Christians if we had more of them in our midst is an interesting question. Clearly, however, given the industry's financial constraints and the demands of affirmative action, we're not likely to acquire measurable numbers of evangelicals anytime soon. There are no numerical goals for *cultural* minorities.

Last November a half-dozen Washington journalists who call themselves the Second Wednesday Group organized a conference called Christians in the Secular Media. According to *Christianity Today*, one of only two small news outlets to cover the event, it attracted sixty participants from fifteen states.

In political terms, the group was mixed, including moderates who are almost as uncomfortable with the religious right's aspirations as is the average heathen journalist. They swapped personal experiences, much the way African-American and Hispanic journalists do. The consensus was that devout evangelicals constitute an abused minority within the profession. One participant, echoing the view of many, told me later, "There is a strong bias among many editors against the religious right, and that affects attitudes toward us."

It's difficult to measure how pervasive this problem is because specific incidents are scattered and ambiguous. But it's an easy call to recognize that we need a broad sensitivity check as we try to deal in a professional way with a movement that promises (threatens?) to be active indefinitely. Whatever we think of its agenda, we must get ourselves to church, if only as observers.

# A Political Story— Chapter and Verse

by Joe Conason

When a friend who had been following the renewal of the religious right urged me in the fall of 1991 to attend the first national meeting of Pat Robertson's

Christian Coalition that November, I resisted the notion, partly out of a conviction that the conventional wisdom was accurate: Christian fundamentalist politics had gone down the same tube that had swallowed Jim and Tammy Bakker, Jimmy Swaggart, and the Moral Majority — not to mention Pat Robertson's presidential candidacy in 1988. But I did go to the meeting of some 900 activists, from which the press was formally barred, and saw that, as usual, the national press corps was missing a big story. The religious right was back, in a new and fascinating form, the reports of its demise having been greatly exaggerated.

It was a dramatic story, of a well-funded, tax-exempt organization that was using highly sophisticated techniques to train members all over the country to seize control of local and state Republican party committees, while working at the same time to re-elect George Bush. It had colorful characters, including big names from within and without the Beltway, and it raised questions about Robertson's adherence to federal tax and election laws. It was a story about a grass-roots political effort, then the fastest-growing and today probably the largest in America, seeking to transform not only one of the two major parties but the nation as a whole in fundamental ways.

But the smart editors of a trendy political weekly based in Washington told me they just didn't see the politically organized religious right as an important story — an attitude by and large reflective of the political press corps. (That magazine's pages, like those of the national dailies and the newsweeklies, now feature regular quotes from

officials of the Christian Coalition as the key political players they surely are.) A less trendy weekly, *The Nation*, did publish a piece on the story several months before Robertson turned up at the GOP convention in Houston with more than 300 delegates, or two-and-a-half times as many as he had won four years earlier. His sudden show of strength occasioned a burst of goggle-eyed reporting on the resurgence of the religious right that, for the most part, failed to explain how Robertson had raised his movement from the political grave in which it had supposedly been reposing.

This year, when the Christian Coalition intervened in New York City's local school board elections, the city's media offered another spurt of coverage, much of it sensationalistic. Readers of most of these stories would never have known that the Robertson group had been organizing in New York, on the county and state level, for more than a year, or that the coalition's state leaders had been cooperating with the Catholic Church in anti-abortion activities for many months.

This cycle of neglect followed by sensationalism and then more neglect is puzzling. Was a liberal press simply engaged in a kind of wish-fulfillment journalism when it declared the religious right dead and buried? Was that same liberal press afraid to delve too deeply into the religious right's revival, for fear that it would be accused of bigotry or of promoting conspiracy theories? And when the story could no longer be ignored, did the press overreact?

Those questions need to be addressed by all of the political editors and writers in this country, because by now the Christian Coalition and other similar and related entities are active in every state and most counties. The answers will explain why the national media missed what was possibly the biggest political story of 1992 — one that was certainly as significant as the Ross Perot movement and far more so than the Jerry Brown phenomenon, both of which received considerably more coverage.

One explanation is that the religious right is a difficult beat to report. Unlike presidential candidates, political parties, and interest groups, the

*Those of us who are in academia have looked increasingly to journalism to do the kind of empirical work on the underlying causes of the social transformations that have given rise to the culture wars. Regrettably, academia is no longer prepared to do the footwork. In the same way, we have looked to the media to give voice to the voices that academia often doesn't want to listen to.*

**SONDRA FARGANIS**

Associate dean of academic affairs,  
New School for Social  
Research, New York

Joe Conason is executive editor of *The New York Observer*.





*Art by its nature will call into question any definition that we ascribe to it. As soon as we put up a boundary, an artist will violate it, because that is what artists do. In the end, we are left with a choice: either we protect art as a whole or we protect ourselves from obscenity. But we choose one at the sacrifice of the other. It is impossible to do both.*

**AMY ADLER**

Lawyer, Debevoise & Plimpton; author of "Post-Modern Art and the Death of Obscenity Law"

religious right doesn't depend upon "free media" or "earned media," in the current jargon, to transmit its message to the audience it is seeking. Instead, Robertson and other leaders of the Christian Coalition reach voters through a network of alternative media, embracing elements of both low and high technology, that stretches well beyond relatively mainstream religious broadcasts epitomized by *The 700 Club*. They have set up their own special satellite-fed broadcast capability — to cite one example of an important Robertson project that has received little notice in the national press — that can facilitate a national televised town meeting or send an alert on a pending issue in Congress. Political reporters accustomed to handouts will never find out about the religious right, or will learn only what the movement's leaders want them to know.

That is what Ralph Reed, Jr., the Christian Coalition's executive director, means when he talks about "flying below radar." Now that the radar of the national press has picked up the religious right, a few things ought to be kept in mind while trying to track them.

■ Treat political stories as political, not religious. The motivation of Pat Robertson and the leaders of the Christian Coalition may be religious, but their aims are political and they have entered the process seeking power in secular institutions. To criticize them or their tactics, or to quote others doing so, is not to deny them their religious or political freedom, no matter how often they make that accusation. There are stories involving Christian fundamentalism that ought to be reported by those journalists specializing in religion; there may also be stories about the religious right to which editors should assign teams of reporters that include religion writers. But those who have closely observed the religious right, especially the Christian Coalition, have noticed how little religion *per se* is discussed at its meetings or in its publications. Its leaders are politicians and activists, and they deserve to be treated by the press with all the skepticism that is customarily directed at such subjects.

■ Perform the necessary background research on religious right figures and organizations. Perhaps this advice seems obvious, but the only alternative to accepting the pronouncements of a Pat Robertson or his local equivalent at face value, on deadline, is to have already examined the individual's background. When Robertson disclaims any religious or nativist bigotry, for instance, it helps to know that in one of his books he disparages Henry Kissinger for having a foreign accent. When he says that the Christian Coalition has in no way violated its tax-exempt status as a "social welfare organization," it is worth remembering that an earlier Robertson-controlled political out-

fit, the Freedom Council, was disbanded in the midst of an investigation by the Internal Revenue Service, although no charges were ever made formally. The point is that the Christian Coalition and groups like it belong to a political subculture that is unfamiliar to reporters used to covering Senate hearings, city council meetings, and major party conventions.

■ Report the religious right story from the field, not from your desk. Again, this is an axiom of all reporting, but one harder to achieve in this case. Mainstream journalists are not likely to be invited to a meeting of the local Christian Coalition chapter, or even to know that such a meeting is taking place, unless they make a special effort to be informed, either through local church bulletins, by monitoring local religious broadcasts, or by subscribing to the coalition's publications. Meanwhile, since most such events are closed to the press, it is important to try to develop sources within the local group and among local opponents of the Christian right.

■ Don't treat leaders, activists, or members in religious right groups with condescension and don't stereotype them. It is worth distinguishing local members of the Christian Coalition from national leaders, even though their ultimate goals may be identical; no one likes to be treated as a stereotype, and to do so is bad reporting, which will cost the reporter useful information. Moreover, the level of knowledge and mastery of current political technology among the leadership of the religious right is generally far higher than that of the journalists who regard them as hicks. The best defense against so-called stealth campaigns by local religious right figures is to understand and describe the techniques they use — from direct mail to phone trees.

■ Demand full disclosure and accountability from religious right groups — and their adversaries. When a local preacher spearheaded the Christian Coalition's foray into New York's school board campaigns, he was forced to admit that he had never sent his children to a public school. Neither, it turned out, had the director of the tri-state office of People for the American Way, his most vocal critic. But reporters need to dig deeper than that — to examine financial disclosure reports, incorporation and tax documents, and other public filings — and to report the failure to file, too, if that is what they discover. The Christian Coalition keeps meticulous documentation of its own events and meetings, including video and audio tapes of speeches by Robertson and other leaders. The evidence of the coalition's true tactics, strategies, and goals is contained in those materials — and it's about time that reporters covering the religious right made a point of asking to see and hear those tapes for themselves. ♦



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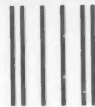
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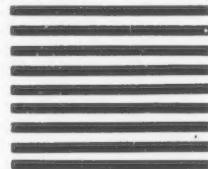
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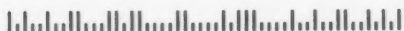
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# COVERING THE CULTURE WAR

## A RESOURCE GUIDE

This list, prepared by Political Research Associates, of Cambridge, Massachusetts, is excerpted from a much more comprehensive resource guide available on request from CJR. Best single guide to diverse groups: *The Activists Handbook: The Concerned Citizen's Guide to the Leading Advocacy Organizations in America*, by David Walls (New York: Fireside/Simon & Schuster 1993.)

### FAST STUDY

#### SELECTED BOOKS

*Culture Wars: Documents from the Recent Controversies in the Arts.* Bolton, Richard, ed., (New York: New Press, 1992).

*Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America.* Hunter, James Davison (New York: Basic Books, 1991).

*Debating PC: The Controversy Over Political Correctness on College Campuses.* Berman, Paul, ed., (New York: Laurel/Dell, 1992).

*Heaven on Earth? The Social and Political Agendas of Dominion Theology.* Barron, Bruce (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervon, 1992).

*New Religious Right, The: Piety, Patriotism, and Politics.* Capps, Walter H. (Columbia: U. of South Carolina Press, 1990).

*New World Order, The: It Will Change the Way You Live.* Robertson, Pat (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1991).

*Spiritual Warfare: The Politics of the Christian Right.* Diamond, Sara (Boston: South End Press, 1989).

*To the Right: The Transformation of American Conservatism.* Himmelstein, Jerome L. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

*Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism.* Marsden, George M. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1991).

#### SELECTED ARTICLES

"Christian Coalition Steps Boldly Into Politics," by Michael Isikoff, *The Washington Post*, September 10, 1992.

"Christian Right's New Political Push," by Don Lattin, *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 12, 1992.

"Crusade For Public Office in Second Stage," by Barry Horstman, *Los Angeles Times*, March 22, 1992.

"The Fraying of America," by Robert Hughes, *Time* magazine, February 3, 1992.

"The Origins of PC," by John M. Ellis, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, January 15, 1992.

"The Politics of Frustration," by Kevin Phillips, *The New York Times Magazine*, April 12, 1992.

### CONSERVATIVE/TRADITIONALIST/ MONOCULTURAL

#### SELECTED BOOKS

*A Christian Manifesto.* Schaeffer, Francis A. (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1981).

*Closing of the American Mind, The: How Higher Education Has Failed Democracy and Impoverished the Souls of Today's Students.* Bloom, Allan (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987).

*Cultural Conservatism: Theory and Practice.* Lind, William S. and Marshner, William H., eds. (Washington: Free Congress Foundation, 1991).

*Gays, AIDS, and You.* Rueda, Enrique T. and Schwartz, Michael (Old Greenwich, CT: Devin Adair Company, 1987).

*Guide to Public Policy Experts: 1993-1994.* Atwood, Thomas C., ed. (Washington, D.C.: Heritage Foundation: 1993).

*The Spirit of Enterprise.* Gilder, George (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1984).

*The Stealing of America.* Whitehead, John W. (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1983).

*Valley of Decision: A Christian Primer to the Political Arena. The War on God, Family, and Country. Who's Waging It? Why? What Can, You Do About It?* Lacy, Dr. Sterling (Texarkana, TX: Dayspring Productions, 1988).

#### SELECTED ARTICLES

"Campus Christians and the New Thought Police," by Tim Stafford, *Christianity Today*, February 10, 1992.

"Sensitivity Fascism: Imposed Legality of Political Correctness on College Campuses," by The Editor, *National Review*, April 27, 1992.

"Sesame Street, the Acceptable Face of Political Correctness," *The Economist*, January 18, 1992.

"What is Anti-Semitism Now?: An Open Letter to William F. Buckley," by Norman Podhoretz, *Commentary*, January 1992.

# The Culture War: The View From The Right

## KEY CONTACTS & RESOURCES

**Accuracy in Academia/Accuracy in Media**, 1275 K St. N.W., Suite 1150 Washington, D.C. 20005, 202-371-6710. Watchdog groups fighting liberal bias.

**American Center for Law and Justice**, P.O. Box 64429, Virginia Beach, VA 23467, 804-523-7570. Legal action in support of Christian principles.

**American Conservative Union**, 38 Ivy St. S.E., Washington, D.C. 20003, 202-546-6555. Central clearinghouse for networking conservatives loyal to the Republican Party.

**American Family Association**, P.O. Drawer 2440, 107 Parkgate, Tupelo, MS 38803, 601-844-5036. Specializes in leading corporate boycotts. The association's main interests are pornography, sex, art, and the media.

**American Freedom Coalition**, 777 Leesburg Pike, Falls Church, VA 22043, 703-790-8700. Started by Robert Grant's Christian Voice and Sun Myung Moon's Unification movement, the coalition seeks to promote "spiritual affirmation, religious freedom, and protection of the family," goals that include opposing abortion and homosexual rights.

**Berean League**, 2875 Snelling Ave. N., St. Paul, MN 55113. Organized the first defeat of a gay/lesbian rights ordinance; trains conservative activists nationally in tactics.

**Christian Action Network**, P.O. Box 606, Forest, VA 24551, 804-385-5156. Led by former Jerry Falwell employee Martin Mawyer.

**Christian Coalition**, Box 1990, Forest, VA 24551, 804-424-2630. Founded by Pat Robertson. The coalition holds that "if America is to return to greatness, she must return to the God of her fathers before it is too late!"

**Citizens for Excellence in Education**, National Association of Christian Educators, 2800 S. Main St., Santa Ana, CA 92707, 714-546-5931. NACE's purpose is to "to reclaim our Christian heritage in our public schools."

**Coalition on Revival**, 89 Pioneer Way, Mountain View, CA 94041, 415-968-3330. COR represents the intersection of Christian Reconstructionism with the more conventional Christian right.

**Colorado for Family Values**, P.O. Box 190, Colorado Springs, CO 80901, 719-577-4916. Organized the campaign to enact Amendment Two, which was enjoined because it appeared to infringe constitutional rights of gays and lesbians.

**Concerned Women for America**, 370 L'Enfant Promenade SW, Suite 800, Washington, D.C. 20024, 202-488-7000. CWA is the nation's largest conservative Christian women's organization.

**Coral Ridge Ministries**, P.O. Box 40, Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33302-0040, 305-772-0404. Led by D. James Kennedy, who was on the founding board of directors of Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority.

**Council for National Policy**, 513 Capitol Court

NE, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20002, 202-675-4333. A policy and fundraising organization that brings together conservative activists from many different organizations. Usually refuses public comment about its meetings and other activities.

**Eagle Forum**, 316 Pennsylvania Ave. SE, Suite 203, Washington, D.C. 20003. Founded and led by Phyllis Schlafly, its best-known campaign was against the ERA.

**Exodus International**, P.O. Box 2121, San Rafael, CA 94912, 415-454-1017. The largest "gay reclamation" ministry, Exodus International promotes the conversion of gay men and lesbians to heterosexuals through therapy.

**Family Life Ministries**, P.O. Box 2700, Washington, D.C. 20013, 202-488-0700. Led by Tim LaHaye, a former leader of Moral Majority and the Council for National Policy. Seeks to save America from secular humanism.

**Family Research Council**, 700 13th St. NW, Suite 500, Washington, D.C. 20005, 202-393-2100. Led by Gary L. Bauer, FRC was a division of James Dobson's Focus on the Family from 1988 until October 1992, when IRS concerns about the group's lobbying led to an amicable separation.

**Focus on the Family**, 420 North Cascade, Colorado Springs, CO 80995, 719-531-3400. Founded and led by James Dobson. Seeks to defend family, faith, and traditional values.

**Free Congress Foundation**, 717 2nd St. NE, Washington, D.C. 20002, 202-546-3000. FCF was formerly known as the Committee for the Survival of a Free Congress and Free Congress Research and Education Foundation, and was founded by Colorado Beer magnate Joe Coors.

**Heritage Foundation**, 214 Mass. Ave. N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, 202-546-4400. One of the most influential think tanks linking the old and new right. Focuses on economic, government waste, foreign policy, and military issues.

**Institute for the Scientific Investigation of Sexuality Family Research Institute**, P.O. Box 2091, Washington, D.C. 20013, 703-693-8536. Founded and led by Paul Cameron, whose methodology for research on homosexuality has drawn criticism from professional associations.

**Intercrossors for America**, P.O. Box 2639, Reston, VA 22090, 703-471-0913. Chaired by John Beckett, the group organizes prayer groups to confront sinfulness.

**John Birch Society**, 770 Westhill Blvd., Appleton, WI 54915, 414-749-3780. Founded and led by Robert Welch until his death, JBS promotes a conspiratorial view of history.

**Liberty University**, Box 20000, Lynchburg, VA 24506, 804-582-2000. Jerry Falwell, former head of the now-defunct Moral Majority, is founder and chancellor of Liberty University.



**National Citizens Action Network**, P.O. Box 10459, Costa Mesa, CA 92627, 714-850-0349. Led by David W. Balsiger, the NCAN specializes in videotapes. Its publication, *Family Protection Scoreboard*, carries articles by Robert W. Lee, a contributing editor to *Conservative Digest* and the John Birch Society's *New American*.

**National Legal Foundation**, 6477 College Park Square, Suite 306, P.O. Box 64845, Virginia Beach, VA 23464, 804-424-4242. Founded by Pat Robertson in 1985 (and now independent of him), the National Legal Foundation provided consultation on the wording of the Colorado initiative.

**National Right to Life Committee**, 419 7th St. N.W., Suite 500, Washington, D.C., 20004, 202-626-8800. Fights abortion and threats to "innocent human life."

**The New Federalist**, P.O. Box 889, Leesburg, VA 22075, 703-777-9451. A publication of the Lyndon LaRouche organization. Other LaRouche publications and organizations include *Executive Intelligence Review*, the Club of Life, and the Schiller Institute.

**Oregon Citizens Alliance**, 9150 SW Pioneer Ct., Suite W, Wilsonville, OR 97070, 503-682-0653. Headed by Lon Mabon, the OCA sponsored the Oregon Abnormal Behavior Initiative. Mabon, also head of the Oregon chapter of the Christian Coalition, presented a workshop in organizing against civil rights legislation for homosexuals at Pat Robertson's Second Annual Road to Victory conference in 1992.

**Rockford Institute**, 934 Main Street, Rockford, IL 61103, 815-964-5819. Publications of the Rockford Institute, which is led by Allan Carlson, include *The Family in America* and *Chronicles*. A main concern is the erosion of traditional values resulting from an increasingly pluralistic society.

**Rutherford Institute**, P.O. Box 7482, Charlottesville, VA 22906-7482, 804-978-3888. Founded by John Whitehead, the Rutherford Institute distributes tapes from conservative speakers R.J. Rushdoony and Phyllis Schlafly, among others.

**Summit Ministries**, Box 207, Manitou Springs, CO 80829, 719-685-9103. Led by David Noebel, formerly of Billy James Hargis's Christian Crusade. Summit publishes the *Summit Journal* and promotes the work of Paul Cameron.

**Traditional Values Coalition**, 100 S. Anaheim Blvd., Suite 350, Anaheim, CA 92805, 714-520-0300. Founded and led by Lou Sheldon, TVC has been active in anti-gay and -lesbian initiatives and fought school-based counseling program for gay and lesbian teens, Project 10.

**Washington Legal Foundation**, 1705 N St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036, 202-857-0240. Litigates to preserve and expand free enterprise.

#### LIBERAL / PROGRESSIVE / MULTICULTURAL

##### SELECTED BOOKS

*And the Band Played On: Politics, People, and the AIDS Epidemic*. Shilts, Randy (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987).

*Architects of Fear: Conspiracy Theories and Paranoia in American Politics*. Johnson, George (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1983).

*Coors Connection, The: How Coors Family Philanthropy Undermines Democratic Pluralism*. Bellant, Russ (Cambridge, MA: Political Research Associates, 1990).

*The Emergence of David Duke and the Politics of Race*. Rose, Douglas D. ed. (Chapel Hill: U. of North Carolina Press, 1992).

*Rolling Back Civil Rights: The Oregon Citizens' Alliance at Religious War*. S.L. Gardiner (Portland, OR: Coalition for Human Dignity, 1992).

##### SELECTED ARTICLES

"Bible Belt Blowhard," by Bill Dedman, *Mother Jones*, November/December 1992.

"Black Hats for the Politically Correct: Behind the PC Controversy Lurks a Conservative Propaganda Campaign," by Gary Grass, *Propaganda Review*, Fall 1991.

"Constructing Homophobia: Colorado's Right-Wing Attack on Homosexuals," by Jean Hardisty, *The Public Eye*, March 1993.

"Credulity, Superstition, and Fanaticism," special issue with articles by Chip Berlet, Allen Lesser, Albert J. Menendez, Fred Pelka, Jeffrey Victor, *The Humanist*, September/October 1992.

"HardCOR," by Fred Clarkson, *Church & State*, January 1991.

"Inside the Covert Coalition," by Fred Clarkson, *Church & State*, November 1992.

"Marketing the Religious Right's Anti-Gay Agenda," by Chip Berlet, *Covert Action Quarterly*, Spring 1993.

"Multiculturalism Bashing: A Review of Magazine Coverage," by Charles V. Willie, *Change*, January/February 1992.

"On Being Labeled Politically (In)correct: Introduction," by Ruth-Ellen B. Joeres and Barbara Laslett, *Signs*, Summer 1992.

"Opposition Research," periodic column by Sara Diamond, *Z* magazine.

"Pogroms Begin in the Mind," by Wolfgang Haug, (with introduction by Janet Biehl), *Green Perspectives*, May 1992, (P.O. Box 111, Burlington, Vermont 05402).

"Political Correctness and Genuine Pluralism," by Beverly Gaventa, *The Christian Century*, February 5, 1992.

"Religious Right Rediscovered" by Russ Bellant, *Christian Social Action*, December 1992.

"SWAT Teams for Jesus," by Skipp Porteus, *Penthouse*, September 1991.

"The Christian Coalition: On the Road to Victory?" by Fred Clarkson, *Church & State*, January 1992.

"The Making of a Christian Police State," by Fred Clarkson, *The Freedom Writer*, September/October 1991.

"The Rise of Fascism in America," by John Gallagher, *The Advocate*, March 24, 1992.

"The Religious Right's Quiet Revival," by Joe Conason, *The Nation*, April 27, 1992.

"The Right Declares a Culture War," by Scott Henson and Tom Philpott, *The Humanist*, March/April 1992.

"Traditional Values, Racism, and Christian Theocracy: The Right-wing Revolt against the Modern Age," by Margaret Quigley and Chip Berlet, *The Public Eye*, December 1992.

"The World According to Pat Robertson," by Skipp Porteus, *Reform Judaism*, Spring 1993.

# The Culture War: The View From the Left

## KEY CONTACTS & RESOURCES

**American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee**, 4201 Connecticut Ave. N.W., #500, Washington, D.C. 20009, 202-244-2990. Produces periodic reports on incidents of violence and the nature of anti-Arab prejudice.

**American Civil Liberties Union**, 132 West 43rd St., New York, NY 10036, 212-944-9800. **ACLU Arts Censorship Project**, 415-391-1655. **Lesbian & Gay Rights Project**, 212-944-9800. Concerned with threat to civil liberties posed by aspects of the religious right, including school prayer, school vouchers, right to die, equal educational and employment opportunity (on the basis of sex, race, and national origin), reproductive freedom.

**American Friends Service Committee**, 1501 Cherry St., Philadelphia, PA 19102, 215-241-7000. Has local branch offices that promote campaigns against racism and sexism.

**American Jewish Committee**, Institute of Human Relations, 165 East 56th St., New York, NY 10022-2746, 212-751-4000. Thirty local and regional offices. Examining rise of the religious right.

**American Library Association**, Intellectual Freedom Committee, 50 E. Huron, Chicago, IL 60611, 312-944-6780. Monitors censorship, school curricula, library protests, legal decisions.

**Americans for Religious Liberty**, P.O. Box 6656, Silver Spring, MD 20916, 301-598-2447. Seeks to preserve diversity of religious and philosophical expression in the context of the strict separation of church and state.

**Americans United for Separation of Church and State**, 8120 Fenton St., Silver Spring, MD 20910, 301-589-3707. Monitors the religious right and promotes church-state separation. Opposes public funding of parochial schools. Supports religiously neutral public education.

**Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith**, 823 UN Plaza, New York, NY 10017, 212-490-2525. Largest and most frequently cited resource on anti-Jewish bigotry and prejudice.

**Applied Research Center**, 440 Grand Ave., Suite 401, Oakland, CA 94610, 510-834-7072. Publishes *Race File*, a bimonthly collection of topical articles concerning race, racism, and diversity.

**Center for Democratic Renewal**, P.O. Box 50469, Atlanta, GA 30302, 404-221-0025. Atlanta resource center for community-based groups fighting prejudice and hate-group activity.

**Cult Awareness Network**, 2421 West Pratt Blvd., Suite 1173, Chicago, IL 60645, 312-267-7777. Monitors religious and political cults. Publishes monthly newsletter, *CAN News*.

**Center for Women Policy Studies**, 2000 P St. N.W., Suite 508, Washington, D.C. 20036, 202-872-1770.

**Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR)**, 175 Fifth Ave., Suite 2245, New York, NY 10010, 212-

633-7600. Assesses media coverage from a liberal point of view.

**Fundamentalism Project**, Swift Hall, University of Chicago, 1025 East 58th St., Chicago, IL 60637, 312-702-1901. A five-year project of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences researching religious fundamentalism around the globe.

**Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD)/GLAAD New York**, 150 W. 26th St., Suite 503, New York, NY 10001, 212-807-1700. Primarily monitors coverage by news organizations. **GLAAD Los Angeles**, P.O. Box 931763, Hollywood, CA 90093, 213-463-3632. Primarily monitors entertainment industry.

**Group Research**, 2000 M St. N.W., Suite 400, Washington, D.C. 20036, 202-347-6626. Has extensive file collection on the political right.

**Index on Censorship**, The International Magazine for Free Expression, 32 Queen Victoria Street, London EC4N 4SS, England, 011-44-71-329-6434.

**Institute for First Amendment Studies**, *Freedom Writer*, P.O. Box 589, Great Barrington, MA 01230, 413-274-3786. Tracks religious right and covers separation of church-and-state issues.

**National Abortion Rights Action League**, NARAL Foundation, 1156 15th St. N.W., 7th floor, Washington, D.C. 20005, 202-973-3000. Membership organization fighting to preserve abortion rights and choice.

**National Association for the Advancement of Colored People NAACP**, 4805 Mt. Hope Drive, Baltimore, MD, 410-358-8900.

**National Campaign for Freedom of Expression**, 918 F. St., #506, Washington, D.C. 20004, 202-393-2787. Also: 1402 Third Avenue, Room 421, Seattle, WA 98101, 206-340-9301. Focuses on art censorship with special attention to attacks by religious right.

**National Coalition Against Censorship**, 275 Seventh Ave., New York, NY 10001, 212-807-6222. Coalition of more than 40 participating organizations.

**National Gay and Lesbian Task Force**, NGLTF Policy Institute, 1734 14th St., Washington, D.C. 20009-4309, 202-332-6483. Major national gay and lesbian civil rights advocacy organization and clearinghouse for issues involving homophobia.

**National Institute Against Prejudice and Violence**, 712 W. Lombard St., Baltimore, MD 21201, 410-328-5170. A national center with a comprehensive approach to the problems of prejudice and intergroup conflict.

**People for the American Way**, 2000 M St. N.W., Suite 400, Washington, D.C. 20036, 202-467-4999. Founded by Norman Lear. Seeks to alert citizens to threats to democracy and pluralism.

**Planned Parenthood Federation of America**, National Office, 810 7th Ave., 14th floor, New York, NY 10019, 212-261-4722.

**Political Research Associates**, 678 Massachusetts Ave., Suite 702, Cambridge, MA 02139, 617-661-9313. Extensive ten-year file and publication archive on right-wing movements.

A Journalist's Life

# A STAR REPORTER'S FALL FROM GRACE

Wherever he worked, Tony Castro's talents were  
recognized and encouraged —  
even, finally, his talent for fraud

*by Charles Rappleye*

Tony Castro's last line of defense was as ironic as it was cunning. Yes, he admitted to a federal district court in Los Angeles this past March, he had invented many of the stories he wrote for the nation's best-read supermarket tabloids. Yes, he had even invented the sources cited for those stories, and yes, he had authorized his employers to write checks to those sources, checks he had then cashed himself in bank accounts created for just that purpose, checks that totaled, over the course of four years, more than \$200,000.

All that was true, Castro's attorney told the court, but justice in the case should take into account the fact that, in Hollywood, all the tabloids operated that way. Reporters were required to submit outlandish celebrity stories, true or not, stories substantiated by cash payments to sources, even if those sources were known to be bogus. While other reporters had authorized checks to roommates, hairdressers, and personal

*Charles Rappleye is a free-lance journalist living in Los Angeles and author of All-American Mafioso: The Johnny Rosselli Story.*



masseuses, Castro had simply gone one step further and pocketed the tip fees himself. His only crime was that, in the hall-of-mirrors world of the scandal sheets, where the boundaries of law and ethics were routinely traversed, Tony Castro had lost his way.

Castro's extraordinary defense was abetted by U.S. District Judge James Ideman, who was openly outraged at what he called a "criminal conspiracy to commit libel" on the part of the supermarket tabloids. On his own ini-

tiative, Ideman scheduled a full day of testimony that delved into the editorial methodology of the scandal sheets, highlighted by the courtroom appearance of tabloid target Clint Eastwood.

While the hearing shed new light on the tabloids, another remarkable story in the courtroom that day was all but overlooked. That was the tale of Castro himself, an accomplished writer who fell out of favor with mainstream journalism and gradually shed the trappings of personal and professional integrity until he was indicted by a federal grand jury.

Antonio Castro, Jr., grew up an outsider in Waco, Texas. His grandparents were illegal immigrants from Mexico, and Tony didn't learn English until the second grade.

A studious child, he worked hard to fulfill dreams of becoming a novelist in his adopted tongue. In high school he contributed columns to the school paper and covered sports for the local daily, the *Waco News Tribune* (now the *Tribune-Herald*).

At Waco's Baylor University his writing, and his reputation, flourished.

"He was recognized early on as a journalism prodigy," recalls fellow student Tom Kennedy, now assistant managing editor at *The Houston Post*. "I thought he would be an Ernest Hemingway kind of guy."

Straight out of school he joined up with the *Dallas Times Herald*, and from there made a series of right moves. He was accepted for a fellowship at the Washington Journalism Center, where he made close contacts among congressional staff and strung stories for *The Washington Post*. He returned to the *Times Herald*, moving over, after a year, to the *Morning News*, where he parlayed his Washington connections into several front-page stories on Watergate and a lengthy article on Nixon's Chicano strategy. That research in turn led to a book titled *Chicano Power*, published in 1974 by the Saturday Review Press and reviewed around the country.

Tony kept moving. From Dallas he went to *The Houston Post*, where editors gave him unusual leeway and encouraged him to exercise his gifts. Castro encountered hostility from other reporters, who resented his youth and free-wheeling style of story selection — sent to the hospital to cover the arrival of the dying Howard Hughes, Castro turned in a think-piece on the billionaire's life that ran on page one. And there was skepticism about his methods. Says Dave McNeely, a colleague of Castro's at the *Morning News* and now a political columnist at the *Austin American-Statesman*, "He tended at times to go for the dramatic without making the extra phone call to see if it was true."

Troubling to some was Castro's lifestyle. He wore flashy clothes, drove a Porsche, dated a series of striking women, and spent late nights at discotheques, all anathema to the rumpled sensibilities of the beat reporter. And beneath it all, there was the question of race. "Tony blew in from Dallas touted by management as some kind of super-Hispanic reporter, and that kind of upset the staff," recalls former *Post* county reporter Gary Taylor. "He had advantages without portfolio. Tony hadn't paid his dues."

In 1976, at the age of twenty-nine, Castro trumped his critics, landing a

Nieman fellowship. Yet even at Harvard, it seemed to his fellows in the Nieman program that something was amiss. "He was kind of dreamy, like he was in another world," Dolores Katz remembers. He had trouble finding his bearings, and print journalism began to seem somehow insufficient. He told one friend he wanted to go into television; to another, he said he planned to join a seminary.

When the fellowship ended in June 1977, Castro returned to Houston but lasted only a day. A new editorial regime had been installed at the *Post*, and when Castro was informed that he would be kept on a short leash, he quit and went back to Cambridge. His colleagues had all departed, but Tony lingered for months, until in October he was arrested for charging more than \$100 on a false credit card at a Harvard bookstore. But if Castro had stalled, he was still marketable, and in early 1978 he was asked by Jim Bellows to join the now-defunct *Los Angeles Herald Examiner*.

Recruited by the Hearst company from *The Washington Star*, Bellows had been commissioned to turn around a moribund paper, one struggling for identity in a market dominated by the *Los Angeles Times*. "We want a far more lively, with-it, warm, human-interest newspaper," Bellows said at the time. "We've got to somehow increase the enthusiasm and quality output as we bring in some people who will inspire the staff." Tony Castro was part of that formula.

There was another element in hiring Castro. "He was a good writer and he was Hispanic," says Don Forst, then executive editor at the *Herald Examiner* and now New York editor of *New York Newsday*. "He could bring us particular insight into the Hispanic community. We were trying to attract a younger crowd, a more diverse crowd."

This seemed to be the opportunity Castro had been waiting for since Baylor. He was given a column that ran routinely on page three and was occasionally pushed up front. He was given free reign, "encouraged," Castro said later, "to go undercover, if necessary, to get a story."

Over the next several years, he produced a brash, wide-ranging, occasion-

ally amazing column for the *Her-Ex*. His topics included poor retarded children in southeast Los Angeles, jet-setting shoppers on Rodeo Drive, and everything in between. They were columns with attitude. In one, about two players in a Raiders football game, Castro concluded with "The Mexicans do the dirty work, and the white people always find a way to mess it up again."

Besides the columns there were front-page pieces that made an impact, like a series profiling a south-of-the-border smuggler who traded shipments of guns for loads of drugs, all in cahoots with American intelligence operatives; or one tracing illegal immigrants from the Mexican border to Los Angeles. They were stories that only Castro could get, featuring passages like this one:

I shared a cigarette with the man. His name was Rogelio.

"Eres Americano?" he asked.

Had I been born in the United States was what he meant.

Yes, I said.

And my parents? he asked.

Yes, they, too.

There was silence. Rogelio looked away from the glaring headlight and declined another puff of the menthol.

"But my grandparents," I said to him in Spanish. "They were Mexican. Born in Mexico. Yes, they came into this country illegally."

Rogelio looked back up at me. A smile, almost one of recognition, crossed his face. He asked for another puff of my cigarette, and we talked until they were led away for detention and deportation the next day....

Castro made waves in the office by adding a shortwaisted black mink coat to his high-style wardrobe and arriving for work in a steel-gray Mercedes 450 SL. At one point his editors felt compelled to run a background check on Castro to see where the money came from, but found nothing illegal.

Meanwhile, among the reporters, the grumbling began again, as it had in Texas. At times, Castro's stories seemed too good, too colorful to be true. A column about the disco scene in Beverly Hills described a crowd as including "a man with a baby boa around his neck, a man pretending to be a Palestinian guerrilla with an Arabian



sword, a woman wearing a silver-plated brassiere, another woman looking the part of a harem harlot...,” and so on. A copy of that column found its way back to Texas, where colleagues recalled a similar story that had been spiked by the *Post* copy desk; it described the crowd at a Houston boutique opening as “a safari-suited man with a baby boa around his neck, a man pretending to be an Arab guerrilla with a large Arabian sword, a woman wearing a silver-plated brassiere, another woman looking the part of a harem member....”

Some of the columns seemed indulgent, pointless, even leering. One began by describing “the tall brunette wearing a red fox jacket and fashionable brown velvet skirt slit almost to her waist.” He writes that he sees the woman crumple up a fistful of dollar bills and throw them at a Vidal Sassoon salon window. He then informs his readers: “I had been following Brown Velvet for almost two blocks because of infatuation. Now I followed her out of curiosity.”

Denis Hamill, another columnist recruited by Bellows and who now writes for the *New York Daily News*, recalls that “Castro was getting his personality too mixed up with writing the column. I talked with him about it at the time. You want to have a voice, but ultimately a column has to tell you something about the city. Tony couldn’t get the idea that the story is about the people in Los Angeles, and not about him.

“He was in love with the idea of being a columnist in Los Angeles,” Hamill adds. “I think he thought the glamour was bigger than it was.”

But this was the new-wave *Herald Examiner*, Jim Bellows’s answer to the steady drumbeat of daily journalism, and Castro’s excesses fit the mold. Other columnists, especially Ben Stein, made frequent fare of sleek women and chance encounters, and it would take something more, something extraordinary, for Castro to lose favor.

That something took place in 1982, during a city council campaign, when, unbeknownst to his editors, Castro volunteered to assist Steve Rodriguez, a political novice running against a long-



Castro in 1982

“I thought he would be an Ernest Hemingway kind of guy,” says Tom Kennedy, assistant managing editor of *The Houston Post*.

time Anglo incumbent representing a largely Hispanic district. “He said he was from Waco and he’d been thinking about this election and how we could win it,” says Rodriguez, now an attorney employed by the city’s Community Development Department. “He came off as trying to help an Hispanic candidate, like his roots were coming out. We were totally flattered.”

Castro did help, advising on the design of campaign literature, penning internal memos under the alias Lance DeNiro, and writing glowing stories on Rodriguez in the *Her-Ex*. Al Juarez, a member of Rodriguez’s staff, told a reporter soon after Castro’s involvement came to light that he recognized the risk Castro was running, “how it could jeopardize his credibility as a

journalist. I said, ‘Tony, why are you putting yourself on the line like this?’ He just giggled.”

Rodriguez ultimately lost the election by a narrow margin, but Castro was not through with him. Word began filtering back to Rodriguez that Castro had turned on him and was preparing an investigative series that would include campaign improprieties and alleged CIA connections among the staff. Rodriguez was stunned. “It was a nightmare. We welcomed him with open arms, and he tried to bury us.”

Alarmed at the prospect of an insider smear, Rodriguez called Mary Anne Dolan, a former assistant managing editor under Bellows in Washington who had followed him to Los Angeles. Dolan, who went on to become editor of the paper in 1981, declined to comment for this story, but Rodriguez says she told him that she would stand

behind her writer; that Castro was a columnist and therefore not bound by the same rules as reporters. Frustrated, Rodriguez turned to the *Los Angeles Times*, which reported the affair in its metro section.

Despite the exposure, Castro continued to pursue his story, and after assigning a second reporter to check his facts, Dolan decided to run a scaled-down version of the investigation, a page-one piece reporting that Rodriguez had accepted laundered funds from backers fearful of exposure as opponents of the incumbent. Still, Castro’s veracity had begun to be questioned and his stature had shrunk. “There was a year of What-do-we-do-with-Tony Castro,” one editor recalls — and Castro decided to move on.

In 1985, he landed a staff writing job with *Sports Illustrated*, but he never regained momentum. Based in Los Angeles, he was an enigma to his editors in New York, and they to him. While he awaited assignments, they watched to see where his enterprise would take him, and both were disappointed. With nobody offering direction, Castro floundered, and his byline appeared only twice in the course of a year. More intriguing than the stories he submitted were those told about him — that he had once shared an apartment with a transvestite, and that he was

experimenting with cross-dressing. In any event, *Sports Illustrated* let him go in early 1986.

Briefly, Castro tried his hand at show business. Over the course of a weekend, he knocked out a spec script for *Miami Vice* that impressed producer Michael Mann, and he was assigned to work up a story for the nascent series *Crime Story*. Castro shared credits for two episodes, but the story meetings were stormy, and there were no new assignments.

Castro was bottoming out, personally as well as professionally. By this time he was married, to model Renee LaSalle, who had given birth to their first child. Desperate for cash, Castro began appearing as a female impersonator at a nightclub called Los Barrolitos, appearing under the name Raquel and collecting as much as \$150 in tips a night. The club soon closed, and Tony was back on the street.

Castro's capacity for impersonation does not strike journalists who worked with him as anomalous. Indeed, they felt that while his editors sought to capitalize on his identity — his ethnicity as well as his skill — Castro himself had only a tenuous hold on who he was. Flashes of that amorphous sense of self surfaced in a story he wrote for the *Los Angeles Reader* in 1988. In "My Life As A Woman," he quipped: "[A shrink] asked if I wanted a sex-change operation. No, I said, but from time to time I have considered an ethnic-change procedure."

In his book *Chicano Power*, written fourteen years before, Castro was already grappling with the dilemmas of assimilation when he quoted a poem popular among barrio youth in the early 1970s that opened with the passage: "I am Joaquin. I am lost in a world of confusion./Caught up in the whirl of an Anglo society..../I must choose/ Between the paradox of victory of the spirit/Despite physical hunger/Or to exist in the grasp/Of the American social neurosis./Sterilization of the soul/And a full stomach...."

As his own career progressed, Castro's version of Joaquin's paradox left him ill-equipped to handle the pressures of journalism. Says Dave McNeely, who helped guide Castro's book research, "This is a difficult profession in which to find your bearings if you don't already have a pretty good com-

pass. I'm not sure Tony's compass had a heavy enough gyroscope."

With financial pressures mounting, Castro returned to journalism, this time at the bottom. In 1986, he started writing for the supermarket tabloids.

At first pass, working for the *National Enquirer*, the *Star*, the *Globe*, and most of the other tattler sheets is not so far a leap from the normal routines of straight journalism. Most of the reporters and editors come from careers in journalism — the *Globe's* then editor, Paul Levy, spent eight years as a national and foreign correspondent for the *Philadelphia Bulletin*, for example — and for the most part their jobs require reporting, development of sources, and careful writing in the breathless, colloquial tone that the papers cultivate. Headlines like SPACE ALIEN MEETS PRESIDENT BUSH! or KITTY COUGHS UP FLAMING HAIRBALLS! are generally left to the *Weekly World News*, the most ludicrous of the papers published by Enquirer/Star Group, Inc.

What distinguishes these tabloids is the hell-bent way they go after stories that involve the rich and famous. Stakeouts, undercover operations, pay-offs, and outright bribes are standard tools in the tabloid reporter's kit. And if the story isn't there, they will inflate one, blowing a dispute over a restaurant menu into a failing marriage.

It is in the Hollywood bureaus, close by the film and television stars that are their standard fare, that the tabloids routinely go overboard. Reporters are expected each week to come up with startling news that will shock millions of readers already inured to the sensational. To ensure a steady flow of gossip, each of the tabloids has developed an extensive network of informants — publicists, waiters, valet parking attendants, and hospital clerks — who can expect a hundred dollars or more for the price of a phone call.

When that isn't enough, reporters are expected to fabricate stories. They lay the groundwork for libel defense by paying off tipsters even though no relevant information was provided; after the stories are published, when attorneys for the defamed start calling, the tabloid lawyers can point to the check stubs and show that the reports were based on

"sources." Tabloid executives like *Enquirer* editor-in-chief and president Iain Calder have emphatically denied that the practice of "false sourcing" exists, attributing the allegation to "a powerful group in the entertainment industry that wants to muzzle the *Enquirer*." But Los Angeles writer Rod Lurie, formerly a reporter with the *New York Daily News*, proved the existence of the practice with the aid of internal ledgers slipped to him by *Enquirer* employees. Lurie's story on false sourcing appeared in *Los Angeles Magazine* in 1990, but Tony Castro learned it by doing it.

At first, according to colleagues at the *Star* and then the *Globe*, Castro relied on the skills and techniques of a straight reporter, backgrounding his stories, chasing down sources, sticking with the facts. But his editors were unimpressed: whatever innate tendency Castro had to take short cuts, to embellish, to exaggerate, was encouraged.

As detailed in testimony in Castro's federal trial, the system worked as follows: editors at the head offices of the tabloids would dream up grabby headlines for the Los Angeles bureau reporters to flesh out. The reporters would then put word out to their network of tipsters that they were looking for material on a particular "story." The tacit understanding was clear — that the right answer was worth quick cash — and, sure enough, by the end of the day the anonymous, corroborative quotes were phoned in.

As the months turned to years, Castro dropped all vestiges of his former incarnation as a legitimate journalist. "Tony really did have the heart of a journalist, he just got sidetracked by all that was going on," says Dave Thomas, who worked with Castro at the *Star* and the *Globe*, and who is now hoping to sell a television show based on his experience. "It became clear that nothing was going to change. Tony and others, including myself, we just let the system wash over us. We lost the sense of our better selves."

Castro learned to play the game, dreaming up stories about whatever celebrities came to mind — Magic Johnson, Sylvester Stallone, Michael Jackson, Cybill Shepherd, and others — and inventing sources to back them

up. And then he began treating his employers with the same contempt they trained on their story subjects. With his wife, Renee, he developed an elaborate scheme to siphon off tip fees through a series of fraudulent identities and bank accounts. Instead of paying fees to tipsters, he collected the money himself. Without informing them, Castro used his friends' names as sources, putting entertainment careers and personal reputations in jeopardy.

Despite the infusion of hundreds of thousands of dollars in tip fees, on top of a hefty staff salary, the couple's spending outstripped their income. Castro lost his mortgage, and ultimately was forced to file for bankruptcy.

Finally, in 1990, he went too far, publishing a story naming Clint Eastwood as the target of a death warrant by the Aryan Nation. The likelihood that some aspiring skinhead might take the story literally apparently meant nothing to Castro — it was just another byline, just another stop at the cashier's window. The story was entirely false, and Eastwood sued for \$20 million. "I was furious that any kind of publication could print an article like that," Eastwood said when he took the stand in the sentencing phase of Castro's federal trial. "I had no idea where it had come from, because I had never heard of any of these people involved in this, I had never heard of any of the quotes stated in the article, and [the photo] obviously isn't a real picture but is a mock-up picture of me in the [cross-hairs of a rifle] scope."

When it became clear in the course of depositions for Eastwood's civil suit that Castro had created his sources from his imagination, the *Globe* attorneys and editors claimed to be astonished and turned the case over to the U.S. Attorney in Los Angeles.

Castro's final act was to turn on the tabloids. According to sources close to the negotiations, he began cooperating



"Tony really did have the heart of a journalist; he just got sidetracked by all that was going on," says Dave Thomas, a *Star* and *Globe* colleague.

with Eastwood's attorneys, helping build a case that allowed the actor to name his settlement price with the *Globe*. At the same time, Castro continued doing business with the tabloids, but now on his own terms. The night that actress Annette Benning gave birth to a baby, Castro peddled a photograph of another baby to two of the supermarket sheets. Both thought they had exclusive pix of the star's newborn — both had been snookered.

In October 1992, a federal grand jury returned an indictment against Castro and his wife for tax violations, conspiracy, and mail fraud; a month later, they pled guilty. His only defense, offered during sentencing hearings last March, was that false sourcing was routine, and his crimes were thus mitigated by the contributory misconduct of the victims of his fraudulent check cashing — the tabloids themselves. The judge proved sympathetic, departing from federal guidelines to reduce Tony's sentence from the two years requested by the government to five months in prison and five months' house arrest. Renee Castro was also sentenced to five months' home detention.

By May 3, when Tony Castro began serving his sentence at the minimum-security federal facility at Boron, California, he had declined two requests to be interviewed for this story — a third, phoned to him at the prison, was not

answered. Castro's Baylor journalism professor and mentor, David McHam, now on the faculty at Southern Methodist University, also declined to be interviewed, citing his continuing friendship with Castro. McHam added that Castro told him he plans to write a book about his story. "Tony asked me not to talk with reporters, and I'm going to honor that," McHam said.

To some of Castro's victims, Castro's conviction was justice done. "It couldn't have happened to a better guy," Steve Rodriguez comments. "The person is evil, and there are not many people I would say that about."

But his former colleagues in journalism regard Castro's downfall with mixed emotions. "I felt sad when I read about the indictment," says Don Frederick, an editor at the *Los Angeles Times* who was a tennis partner of Castro's when both worked at the *Herald Examiner*. "For one thing, he was a friend once, and now he was in a heap of trouble. And for another, he had talent." ♦



Free Press Blues  
**IVORY COAST**

# Old Habits Are Hard To Break

Much of Africa's press is free for the first time.  
That's the good news.

by Howard French

For more than three decades *Fraternité Matin*, the consistently staid red-and-black tabloid of Ivory Coast, was the only paper this country knew. Every day, the paper could be counted on to herald President Félix Houphouët-Boigny's "Thought of the Day" across the top of the page. Inside every paper, the country's elderly statesman could be found looking dignified as he greeted foreign diplomats or visiting heads of state or local civic groups. As a matter of custom, the guests were shown giving fair approximations of a full Japanese bow, or at least quoted praising the president's peerless wisdom and generosity of spirit.

For those who dared ask why things were so, the response was that, in a country made up of more than fifty ethnic groups, the threat of tribal animosities required that the press contribute to consensus building. Press on, and the explanation would include what had been the barely subliminal message contained in the news all along: Ivory Coast, a French colonial backwater until 1960, was specially blessed to have a philosopher king as president. For a generation of journalists in Ivory Coast, all of this had amounted to conventional wisdom. Those who had trou-

ble with these notions often found that they also had trouble keeping a job.

With varying degrees of refinement, the same journalistic model was, until recently, in place across much of the African continent. From "revolutionary" Benin and Congo, where the Marxist-inspired slogans of absolute leaders were doled out as news, to Zaïre and Togo, where the official press portrayed leaders as single-handed nation-builders, the African press clung to surprisingly consistent guidelines.

All of these countries shared at least one other thing as well in recent years: while their leaders basked in praise, the euphoria of independence faded and their economies sank.

That changed in 1990, in the kind of transforming flash that few see coming. Almost overnight, more than a dozen countries across the continent started moving toward democracy. With a press that had long lain dormant taking a leading role, Africa's ruinous political slumber finally seemed to be ending.

Reporters and editors of the region gathered their courage, and sometimes pooled their own money; would-be publishers began pushing for licenses to print. In many countries, for the first time ever, a competitive free press was born.

In Ivory Coast it had never been illegal to publish an independent paper, but the government had always found ways to deter anyone who entertained the thought. So in early 1990, when a group



of journalists, all former employees of the state media, set out to establish a new newspaper, *La Voie* (The Path), in the Ivorian capital, Abidjan, they found that the toughest hurdle they faced was fear.

"First we went to see the people at *Fraternité Matin*, perhaps a bit naively, but since they had the only real press in the country we asked if we could pay them to print our paper," recalls Raphaël Lakpé, for years a business reporter at the government paper, now the editor-in-chief of *La Voie*. "They told us, 'No deal. You are an opposition outfit.'"

"So we scoured the entire city, but every time we thought we had found a printer, when we showed up to sign a contract, their doors were shuttered and the lights were out."

*La Voie* got its start that August, when the journalists finally found a printer willing to risk the wrath of the government. Ever since, the paper, which is loosely associated with the leading opposition party, the Ivorian Popular Front, has been hard pressed to print enough copies.

In the wake of *La Voie*'s success in Ivory Coast, *Fraternité Matin*, mean-

Howard French, who covered Africa as a free-lance writer for The Washington Post and other publications in the 1980s, is Caribbean bureau chief for The New York Times.



while, became prized as wrapping paper for the fish and fried plantains sold from street-corner hibachis, where the people of Abidjan's steel-and-glass downtown eat on the run.

Soon, Ivory Coast's press had plenty of company in the region, as alternative publications, taking measure of new freedoms, began sprouting in many countries. In countries like Gambia, Sierra Leone, and Togo, the efforts of a new generation of journalists initially ran into stiff resistance from authorities who harassed the founders and editors of papers that dared to question their countries' leaders. In places like Benin and Mali, forerunners of the democratic wave, everything from satirical weeklies to economic and political journals flourished, limited only by the economics of the marketplace.

"There have been two motors pushing the drive for change in Africa: the universities and the press," says Barthélemy Kotchy, dean of the faculty of letters at the University of Abidjan, and a leader of the push for greater democracy in the country. "Students have always played an important role in agitating for change, only to see their ferment repeatedly suppressed. This time, however, things were different. Just as the universities began to simmer, Africa's journalists discovered their pens."

In Ivory Coast — as in Mali, Ghana, Congo, Burkina Faso, and other countries as well — the unprecedented explosion of a free press onto the scene was quickly followed by the freest elections any of these countries had seen since independence.

For the first time, the Ivorian parliament seated opposition deputies, and policy became a matter of public debate.

But as in much of Eastern Europe, life in Africa under newly democratic rule has not ushered in the millennium. Ivory Coast, an island of prosperity compared with many of its neighbors, is crushingly poor by Western standards. It remains a small country with a towering debt, where cocoa and coffee farmers labor ever harder to eke out a living against a backdrop of falling commodity prices abroad and high inflation at home. A free press and young democracy have done little, so far, to affect such realities.

For Ivorian journalists, however,

there is already a clear sense that nothing will be the same again. A small but politically charged event last summer reinforced that sense of change. As the opposition leader, Laurent Gbagbo, was about to be released after 110 days in jail (on what Western embassies said were trumped-up political charges), *Fraternité Matin* tried a bit of subterfuge. Seeking to prevent any triumphal rally by Gbagbo's supporters, the weekend edition of the paper ran an article announcing that he would be released "in the beginning of the week," although he was actually to be freed quietly on the weekend.

Not so long ago this ploy would have worked without a hitch. But journalists from *La Voie* got wind of the plan and showed up in time to capture images of the prisoner's walk to freedom. A large rally followed, and for a week *La Voie*, which now prints 50,000 copies daily and has become the nation's most widely read paper, delivered stern editorial lectures to the government about "disinformation" that became the talk of the town.

"Reading *La Voie* is like watching a bunch of ordinary citizens upbraiding a corrupt gendarme," one young Ivorian, waiting for a downtown bus, said at the time. "It's a spectacle worth paying for." Already, however, it is becoming clear that the self-righteous swagger of the opposition press is not always merited.

With *Fraternité Matin* struggling in the face of the new competition, the government recently decided to privatize the newspaper. As a result, it is laboring mightily to become both more interesting and more credible.

By contrast, *La Voie*, for all its popularity, seems to be lapsing into many of the same excesses and faults for which it criticized *Fraternité Matin*. These days, Gbagbo, the opposition leader, is treated with much the same reverence formerly reserved for Houphouët-Boigny in *Fraternité Matin*. Just as the offices of *Fraternité Matin* bear the president's portrait on most walls, so, too, Gbagbo's posters are ubiquitous at *La Voie*, despite protestations that it is not a party paper.

The managing editors of these two warring newspapers, interestingly, are brothers, and the tension and ambiguity

of journalism in Ivory Coast is reflected in their thinking.

For years, each had labored within the system while Ivory Coast strove to become economically vibrant, an African Singapore, with its own enlightened dictator to match.

On this score, the brothers, Michel Kouamé and Atta Koffi, loyally wrote articles arguing that such extravagances as the president's five-month vacations in his sumptuous chateaux in France and Switzerland were deserved.

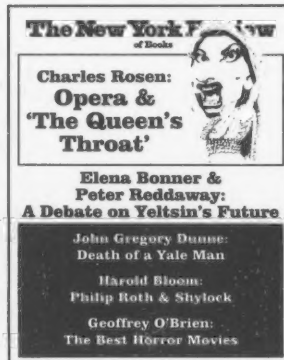
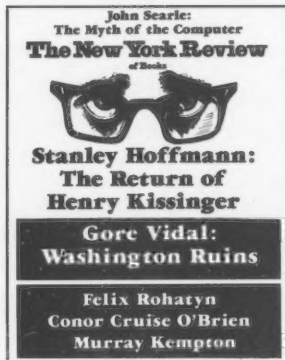
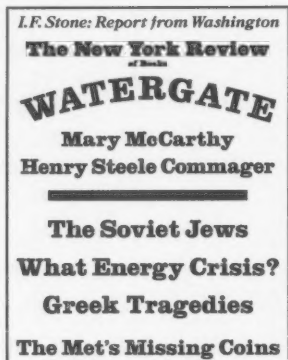
Now, from a cramped office at *La Voie*, where our conversation is repeatedly interrupted by the half dozen young reporters under his direction, Atta Koffi, a balding, bespectacled fifty-two-year-old, speaks of that period as a zombie might of his trance after being awakened. "At the time, it was still a single-party system and I was merely doing my job," he says. "Everyone was just doing his job. The only thing that held things together within the party was a community of petty interests."

Michel Kouamé, Koffi's forty-two-year-old brother, who was recently made managing editor at *Fraternité Matin*, had betrayed uneasiness with the single-party system long before the winds of democracy began to sweep the region. Yet he remains troubled by the threat of ethnic divisions, and he wonders aloud about the maturity of his people under an unfettered democracy.

"After taking a step forward toward pluralism, we are now in the stage of great self-doubt," Kouamé says, in the course of an interview frequently interrupted by the ringing of the twin telephones in his heavily air-conditioned office. "When things began to change, every young journalist said enthusiastically, 'We are going to remake things in our image now.' But that has not been simple. The same elite controls the country, unwilling to surrender any privilege. The same reflexes toward blind partisanship prevail. Old habits die hard."

"In a sense," says his brother, over at *La Voie*, "each of us has to learn the craft all over again, to stop being someone else's tool. But no one imagined how hard that would be in the midst of political combat." ♦

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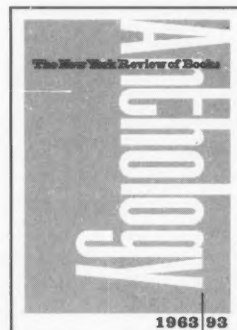
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## TECHNOLOGY

# M MEMO TO: ALL JOURNALISTS RE: THE NEW INFORMATION INDUSTRY

BY PHILIP S. BALBONI

With less than seven years left in this decade, the last of the second millennium, most of us living today will participate in and perhaps shape one of the greatest periods of change in the history of human communication. New information and digital communications technologies are rapidly laying the foundation for an array of new delivery systems and content options. Among the key trends that will have a major impact on journalism are:

- An explosion in the availability of news and information sources that can be accessed directly by the end-user, without the journalist as the intermediary.

- The proliferation of on-line multimedia information databases of all kinds. These are likely to incorporate new software that will perform automatic sorting and presentation of the content. Personalized newspapers and newscasts are almost certain to be available by the end of the decade, in effect bypassing the editor.

The providers of these personalized newscasts are not always going to be existing media entities, and users of

these databases will be able to go around the customary journalistic processes. Both developments present significant potential for the abandonment of traditional standards.

- The introduction of interactive elements into all media, offering television viewers in particular greater control and selectivity in their news and information consumption habits, thereby redefining the medium itself.

- A continuing movement away from mass media to more targeted, direct media vehicles — from niche channels (history, golf, classical music, etc.) to highly specialized information services. This will pose financial and editorial challenges to the publishing and television industries. Information and content providers will be stimulated by the creation of multiple pathways into the home: terrestrial broadcast, cable, fiber optic, direct broadcast satellite, and wireless. More television channels, covering every large and small niche you can imagine, will lead to further erosion in the viewer and advertiser base of the traditional broadcast networks and their affiliates.

From the consumer's standpoint, the information future is rich with choice and possibility. For the journalist, the view is more troubling. Unquestionably, the journalistic process, in which content is carefully gathered and edited, will be a defining difference between genuine news product and all else in the digital domain. Ultimately, it is the integrity of the newsgathering and editing processes that distinguishes the journalist from others who seek to serve similar information needs.

Journalism has professional standards, an editorial structure, and a hierarchy that can impose sanctions for failing to adhere to standards. Journalists select and organize content and thereby add value to it. We also have the skills required to make information accessible to the general public.

But we cannot rely on these strengths alone. Technology is tearing down barriers and creating new opportunities with great speed. On-line databases — content reservoirs of entertainment, news, archival material, history, science, art, and education — will profoundly alter the relationship between consumers and the providers of content,

especially such traditional providers as newspapers, magazines, and television. They will also change the nature of the relationship between journalists and the public we serve. In some ways, thanks to a variety of interactive means, we will be more immediately and intimately in touch with people; in others, we will be bypassed.

To survive and thrive in the coming information age journalists need to take several steps:

- We must overcome our naivete about technology. Too many of us either hate it, ignore it, or love it so blindly that we miss its true direction. We need members of the profession who are capable of being among the technology leaders of the digital information world.

- We must become more knowledgeable about the economics of the new information age, and be conversant with new players who will compete with and perhaps beat out the media companies that have been our traditional employers.

## On-line databases will change the relationship between journalists and the public we serve

- We must pay close attention to federal communications policy. We do not need to lobby in the same way that special interest groups do, nor should we. However, we do have to understand the critical role that regulatory policy has played and will continue to play in defining the communications winners and losers.

Last year's big battle was over the cable bill and the power struggle between the broadcast and cable industries. This year, Congress is ready to begin consideration of a sweeping overhaul of the nation's communications laws. Integral to this will be such issues as the role the powerful regional Bell telephone companies will be permitted to play in offering video and information services to their customers in competition with existing media companies.

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*Philip S. Balboni, formerly vice-president and news director of WCVB-TV in Boston, is special assistant to the president of The Hearst Corporation.*

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— "Labor Letter," *Wall Street Journal*, 5/25/93

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Journalists' employers have generally lined up solidly in opposition to telco entry into content areas. But this solidarity may not last forever. Indeed, some prominent media companies are already embracing their "enemies," especially overseas. In Great Britain, U.S. West has

It is integrity that distinguishes the journalist from others who seek to serve similar information needs

partnered with Tele-Communications, Inc., America's largest cable operator, to offer cable television service, while Southwestern Bell and Cox Cable Communications have joined forces to provide both telephone and cable service there. NYNEX has similar arrangements with Time Warner in Hungary and Scandinavia. And even in this country joint ventures are starting to appear, like the one formed by Dow Jones and Bell South for electronic information services. Meanwhile, the Clinton administration has already committed itself to stimulating the development of so-called information superhighways, basically fiber optic networks, which will probably be constructed by telephone and cable companies.

■ We need to be more vocal advocates within our own organizations for greater investment in the *quality* of the news product. We will not survive in the new information age if we experience further declines in the quality of the service we provide to consumers, for the simple reason that new alternatives will exist for obtaining much, if not all, of the same information.

■ Finally, journalists and journalism organizations need to be in the vanguard of those who are adapting the new technologies for public service ends. We should be the standard-setters in this vital area and not leave to others the opportunity to forge new electronic bonds with the people we serve. ♦



# BOOKS

## OF BULLS AND BEARS AND SACRED COWS

BY CHRIS WELLES

*The Wall Street Journal* makes a specialty of probing the inner workings of corporations. But Dow Jones & Company, which publishes the *Journal*, has remained remarkably opaque to outsiders, by conscious design. The last significant look at Dow Jones was Edward E. Scharff's *Worldly Power: The Making of the Wall Street Journal*. That work, however, was published in 1986, when the *Journal* was close to its zenith and before the recent financial decline of Dow Jones and the *Journal* and the controversy about the paper's editorial direction. Scharff attributed Dow Jones's reclusiveness, in part, to the "shy, skeptical Midwesterners" who controlled the *Journal* during its early years and eschewed the cult of personality that pervades the ranks of many newspaper publishers and editors. Many newspaper executives able to discourse at length about the Sulzbergers and the Grahams are totally unfamiliar with the doings of such seminal figures in the *Journal*'s history as Clarence W. Barron and Bernard ("Barney") Kilgore.

*The Power and the Money: Inside The Wall Street Journal*, by Francis X. Dealy, Jr., strenuously endeavors to fill this void. Despite its 384 pages, however, the book probably won't endure as the definitive account. It lacks the overarching narrative drama and incisive sociological insights of such works as *The Power and the Glory*, by Gay

Talese, and *The Patriarch: The Rise and Fall of the Bingham Dynasty*, by Susan E. Tift and Alex S. Jones. But *The Power and the Money* does deliver on one key front: gossip, much of it unflattering. Dealy, who worked at Dow Jones on the business side as an ad salesman and general manager of the company's now-defunct *Book Digest* between 1977 and 1982, interviewed 313 people, including 153 current and former *Journal* staffers. Most interviews were in person and tape recorded. He obtained extensive access to senior Dow Jones executives and even to the Bancroft family, which nominally controls Dow Jones stock but exercises little executive power. In a way, *The Power and the Money* is an oral history of arresting anecdotes and remembrances, spiced by Dealy's often acerbic characterizations of the foibles of the company's major personalities. Not surprisingly, the *Journal* and Dow Jones have already attacked an excerpt from the book published in *Spy* magazine, alleging that it contained numerous factual errors. Nevertheless, the book does seem to capture the flavor of the place.

Clarence Barron and Barney Kilgore are Dealy's heroes. Barron, a striking figure at 300-plus pounds, bought the *Journal* in 1900 and as publisher revitalized it editorially and financially. He introduced such popular features as "Heard on the Street" and, at a time when most financial journalism read like machinery manuals, fostered the *Journal*'s distinctively lively and lucid

**WSJ managing editor Norman Pearlstine (right) socializing with American Express c.e.o. James Robinson, 1989**



prose and taste for controversy. Barron also initiated the *Journal*'s unusually rigid separation between the editorial pages and the news sections. (The edit page, now overseen by Robert L. Bartley, is conservative, while the sentiments of most reporters and editors tend to be liberal. The two groups occasionally take potshots at each other. Dealy says Dow Jones executives encourage the rivalry "to keep the paper interesting.") When Barron died in 1928, his estate passed to his daughter Jane, who had married Hugh Bancroft.

Kilgore, who became the *Journal*'s managing editor and later president of Dow Jones, also engineered a broad

**THE POWER AND THE MONEY:  
INSIDE THE WALL STREET JOURNAL**  
BY FRANCIS X. DEALY, JR. BIRCH LANE PRESS  
448 PP. \$22.50

overhaul of the *Journal* in the 1930s and '40s. To expand readership and attract more advertising, he transformed what had been a narrow trade publication distributed mostly in New York into a national newspaper that specialized in business and finance but defined those terms broadly. He initiated the paper's signature page-one "leaders," often lengthy features subjected to meticulous rewriting by phalanxes of editors to read like magazine articles.

The past half dozen years have not been kind to Dow Jones and the *Journal*, and Dealy spares no quote or anecdote to drive home that fact. What Dealy views as the company's fall from grace was caused by a mix of business and editorial misjudgments. He traces them in part to a shift in the company's management from venturesome leaders and innovators like Barron and Kilgore to unimaginative followers and bureaucrats, particularly recently retired c.e.o. Warren H. Phillips.

Dealy also fingers the longstanding tradition of restricting appointment to Dow Jones's top business positions to former *Journal* journalists. The logic behind this tradition was that "because the *Journal* is the heart and soul of Dow Jones, the company needs a journalist at the helm." Journalist management has translated into an extensive array of business debacles. They include such publishing ventures as the *National*

Chris Welles is a senior editor at Business Week.

*Observer*, launched in 1962 and closed down in 1977 after \$17 million in losses, and *Book Digest*, acquired in 1978 for \$10.1 million and folded in 1982. The *Observer's* embarrassing failure, in particular, seemed to imbue Dow Jones with an abiding aversion to financial risk. The company has been very leery about spending money or taking on debt. When it has gotten up enough nerve to start new ventures, it has typically recruited partners, usually unnecessarily. The effect has been to hobble and inhibit decision-making.

Several episodes graphically demonstrate this. In 1975, two California entrepreneurs approached Dow Jones to get financing for a new user-friendly computer. Phillips rejected the idea on the ground that mainframes were the wave of the future. Steven Jobs and Robert Wojniak thus had to look elsewhere for funds to launch Apple Computer.

Dow Jones missed out on another unique opportunity in 1991 when Financial News Network was put up for sale. A cable network specializing in business news reaching 35 million households, FNN could have given the *Journal* and its huge news resources a vast new distribution system. And FNN wanted to be acquired by Dow Jones. Yet Dow Jones executives let the opportunity slip through their hands. They lost valuable time seeking partnerships with Paramount Pictures and then Westinghouse Broadcasting. When General Electric made its own offer, Dow Jones executives so botched the bidding that GE walked away with the prize. It was, said William Dunn, former head of Dow Jones's Information Services Group, "a monumental stumble."

Dow Jones did pull off one large acquisition, but at a prohibitive cost. For years, the company had been interested in Telerate Inc., a thriving publisher of electronic financial data with a bright future. Dow Jones had the opportunity to buy Telerate as early as 1974 for \$1 million. Years passed as the company's executives tried to decide whether to make a move. Meanwhile, as Telerate grew, the asking price kept going up. Eventually, Dow Jones began buying Telerate in pieces — to avoid incurring excessive debt — over a period of four years. Not until 1990, after

shelling out a total of \$1.6 billion, did Dow Jones complete the deal. By that time, Telerate's market position was being eclipsed by rival services offered by Reuters, Knight-Ridder, and Bloomberg. Telerate is still struggling.

Dealy also faults Dow Jones executives for their obliviousness to the *Journal's* advertising and circulation troubles. For much of its history, circulation climbed almost automatically and advertising space was in such demand that the *Journal's* main problem was how to ration it out. By the early 1980s,



Dow Jones c.e.o. Peter R. Kann

though, intensified competition from other media was causing these robust gains to plateau. Yet *Journal* executives paid no attention. After taking over as managing editor in 1983, Norman Pearlstine engineered a huge staff expansion, hiring 143 editorial people in his first ten months, far beyond budget. But no one seemed to mind. Only in the past two or three years has management moved aggressively to arrest what became a painful advertising and circulation decline that caused a sharp drop in Dow Jones's profitability.

These business blunders were compounded by editorial lapses. Dealy is especially harsh on Pearlstine and Karen Elliott House, Dow Jones international vice-president and wife of current chief executive Peter R. Kann. Pearlstine clearly enlivened the *Journal* — a little too much, say some critics — and broadened its coverage into such areas as law and marketing, which were covered in a new third section. But in a stark departure from *Journal* tradition,

Pearlstine was eager not only to cavort with celebrities but to be one himself. As Pearlstine told Dealy, "I like to know the people we write about."

Getting to know Donald Trump was just one of several embarrassing incidents stemming from Pearlstine's ties with celebrities. In 1987, he and his wife, Nancy Friday, went on a helicopter junket with Trump to one of his Atlantic City casinos, which included a Tyson-Foreman boxing match. Neither Pearlstine nor Dow Jones reimbursed Trump for the expenses. "Had I done that, I would have, and should have, been fired," former *Journal* reporter Bill Paul told Dealy. In 1991, the *New York Post* disclosed that *Journal* real estate reporter Neil Barsky had gotten three free fight tickets from Trump. Dealy reports that the Dow Jones board of directors considered whether Barsky should be fired and whether, if he were, Pearlstine should be fired also. "It was discussed," director and Bancroft family member William C. Cox, Jr., told Dealy. "But Warren [Phillips] felt it was best to handle the matter in a different way."

Dealy presents evidence — some of it challenged by the *Journal* and Dow Jones — that the *Journal* softpeddled stories about several Pearlstine friends, such as American Express's James Robinson and deal-maker Ronald O. Perelman. "When you're doing a piece on one of Norman's friends, it's hard to ignore him looking over your shoulder, even when he's not," *Journal* reporter Laurie Cohen told Dealy. She is in a position to know. In 1991, she turned in a story reporting that corporate takeover specialist Eli S. Jacobs was about to default on \$400 million in junk bonds. According to Cohen, Daniel Hertzberg, her supervisor, said, "We can't run that; Jacobs is a friend of Norm's." He killed the story. Cohen confronted Pearlstine, who, she says, told her, "I don't want to alienate one of our good sources. And besides, Eli is not going to default on those bonds." When Dealy asked Pearlstine's deputy, Paul E. Steiger, now the *Journal's* managing editor, about the piece, he said, "It didn't go anywhere. Just didn't move the ball." Cohen's piece was eventually published after Jacobs defaulted on the bonds.

Dealy quotes several financial executives who claim that Pearlstine is sus-

ceptible to influence. As financial public relations consultant Davis Weinstock put it, "Pearlstine is, as the street says, 'reachable.'" Stephen A. Schwarzman, chief executive of the Blackstone Group, an investment firm, said, "We all know Norm is a starfucker and the way to get to him is to take him to lunch."

Karen Elliott House won't be any happier than Pearlstine to read Dealy's book. Dealy rather hyperbolically terms her marriage to Kann "the highest level of nepotism in corporate America." He presents telling evidence that Kann actively promoted House's career at the *Journal* and that she used her relationship with him to "terrorize" many *Journal* employees.

Like Pearlstine, House had her sacred cows, one of which was South Korean military dictator Roh Tae-Woo. Roh is not only a close personal friend but helped expedite the adoption by her and Kann of a Korean orphan. Without disclosing the relationship, House wrote a *Journal* story lauding Roh. House clashed, sometimes acrimoniously, with Joseph Manguno, the *Asian Wall Street Journal's* Seoul correspondent. In 1990, Manguno, a twelve-year veteran, was fired without severance pay. Sources told Dealy that "his termination resulted directly from House's vindictiveness." House, says Dealy, was responsible for the departure of numerous *Journal* staffers: "No one crossed her; and those who tried were fired, sometimes brutally."

One of her victims, Dealy claims, was none other than Norman Pearlstine, who had objected to her promotion as foreign editor. Due to House's continual importuning, Kann by 1987 had forced Pearlstine to delegate most of his daily responsibilities to Steiger, who has a much less glitzy editorial approach. Warren Phillips, who liked Pearlstine, prevented further action. But six months after Phillips retired in early 1992, Pearlstine resigned.

All of this gossip (not all of which, it should be said, is being revealed here for the first time) makes for lively reading. But what difference does it make for the *Journal* reader? A lot, Dealy argues. Some friendly coverage of Pearlstine's and House's buddies seems indisputable. But Dealy pushes the point much further. He says the Kann-

House relationship "continues to sap the strength and integrity of the *Journal* news operation." Pearlstine, he argues, was so sucked in by his buddies that the *Journal* missed a lot of the abuses of the '80s. Unlike former *Journal* investigative reporter Jonathan Kwitney, who told Dealy that "the '80s were, even though I hate the term, the decade of greed," Pearlstine calls the '80s "the decade of prosperity, the free enterprise system at its best."

As cases in point, Dealy says the *Journal* missed such huge stories as the savings and loan scandal and was late on the Michael Milken and insider trading Wall Street scandals. Even more broadly, he claims that investigative reporting of systemic corporate abuse has been fading from the *Journal*.

Dealy overstates his case. There is no question that the *Journal* missed much of the S&L scandal — but then so did most of the rest of the mainstream press. It was somewhat late in catching up with the Wall Street scandals. But once reporters James B. Stewart and Daniel Hertzberg got on the case, they outreported just about everyone else, even though their apparent cozy dealings with prosecution sources who provided many helpful leaks gave their work a pro-prosecution bias. *Journal* reporter Peter Truell was usually ahead of the competition in uncovering the vast Bank of Credit and Commerce International banking fraud.

Fortunately for *Business Week* and other business publications, the *Journal* does miss some big stories. But as someone who competes regularly with the *Journal*, I don't perceive any significant diminution in the *Journal's* ardor to dig up dirt about bad guys. It's far from clear that the sort of gossip Dealy offers really has had much of an impact on the *Journal's* coverage. Backstage stories about brutal rivalries, intimidation by management, and miscellaneous other strife at *The New York Times* have been the stuff of books and articles for years. Current and former *Times* reporters regularly complain about what an inhospitable place it is to work. But the *Times* still puts out an outstanding newspaper.

So, for all of the soiled linen that Dealy hangs out, does *The Wall Street Journal*.

## DOUBLETAKE ON TV NEWS

BY NEIL HICKEY

Anybody who needs to know, or simply wants to know, what goes on inside the television news business will have a swell time finding out in the pages of these two dispatches from the front: one a breezy, irreverent memoir; the other a roller-coaster of a novel. Oddly, the late NBC newsperson Jessica Savitch shows up in both: mercilessly characterized in Eric Burns's retailing of his own peculiar career and, en passant, in the novel as a regrettable example of what can go wrong.

First, Burns. He starts as an anchorman in Parkersburg, West Virginia, "the 196th largest market in the United States," where he scrupulously studies — and tries to counterfeit — the man-

### BROADCAST BLUES: DISPATCHES FROM THE TWENTY-YEAR WAR BETWEEN A TELEVISION REPORTER AND HIS MEDIUM

BY ERIC BURNS  
HARPERCOLLINS. 241 PP. \$22

### STATION BREAK

BY STEVE FRIEDMAN AND ROSEMARY FORD  
ST. MARTIN'S. 312 PP. \$19.95

nerisms of the Big Leaguers in New York. But his onscreen imitation of Peter Jennings, he writes, comes across as "uncaring, snooty, like a butler announcing dinner to a group of guests for whom he has no particular regard." His version of "the robotically menacing Dan Rather" is even worse: imitating Rather's "loopy grin" causes him to look like "a mental patient who has just been told something he does not understand, but is afraid to let on lest the people who run the asylum delay his release." Tom Brokaw is "like the kids who danced in the background of *American Bandstand*" — his technique

Neil Hickey is senior editor of TV Guide.



wasn't worth copying.

Onward to a job in Minneapolis, and then to NBC (the *Today* show, *NBC Nightly News*), where his duties included a continuing segment called "Cross-Country," an unabashed knock-off of Charles Kuralt's patented "On the Road" format. Kuralt — "a master at the discovery... of the little truth" — tended to "pander" (writes Burns) to the "classic urbanite fantasy" that small-town America was somehow holy, when all it really had was "a suffocating cultural aridity." And anyway, Burns would do it better (his boss assured him), and in a few years "people will forget all about" the CBS star. Wrong.

Burns did not prosper at NBC, but he remained long enough to know Jessica Savitch, whose co-workers called her "bitch, usurper, ice queen, bimbo, loon, madwoman, amateur"; who screamed at office mates, threw large objects at the technical staff, and cried "too easily"; and whose heavy cocaine use regularly caused her to forfeit assignments. NBC News narrowly avoided a major scandal, says Burns, since Savitch was considered a top contender to become the first solo female anchor ever at a major network. So much for *de mortuis nil nisi bonum*.

Moving right along in his cautionary picaresque tale, Burns narrates how he sank in the quicksand of public television bureaucracy after proposing a documentary series about tobacco and alcohol called "Old Habits." After initial wild enthusiasm and lofty promises, "the network for the humor-impaired" (as a PBS exec called it) junked the project, leaving Burns "enraged and outraged." In a boozy monologue to his wife, he pronounces PBS a collection of "hypocrites and frauds" with "the manners of linebackers, the trustworthiness of streetwalkers, and the perceptiveness of judges for the Miss America Pageant." No wonder the government won't give them enough money, he rants, and no wonder most people prefer commercial television.

Onward to a job at *Entertainment Tonight* in Hollywood, where the task of interviewing actress Molly Ringwald triggers in Burns an epiphanic moment comparable to St. Paul's on the road to Damascus. A "protocol of banality" is

## He has spent too much time learning how to be a messenger and not enough on the nature of the message

operative in such enterprises, he decides, in which the interviewer is less a journalist than a batting-practice pitcher, and in which an unspoken conspiracy exists between subject and interviewer to pretend that "yet another person of limited accomplishment" is worthy of our fascination. Hypocrisy in Hollywood, he concludes, is not only a "recognized school of philosophy" but a means of coping with one's own duplicity. Predictably, he is canned from *Entertainment Tonight* for "skewing elite."

After stints with a local station in Los Angeles and the Arts & Entertainment network, Burns comes to the belated conclusion that perhaps he's not cut out for television, that's he's no longer willing to make the bargain with the devil that requires him to tell other people's stories. A McLuhanoid revelation strikes him: that he has spent too much time learning how to be an appealing messenger and not enough on the nature of the message.

"Maybe I'll write a book," he decides. And he has — an engaging, honest one.

Steve Friedman, executive producer of the *Today* show, has penned (with co-author Rosemary Ford) a different perspective on TV news. His heroine in *Station Break* is sexy, twenty-five-year-old hotshot reporter Mary Reed, who's hell-bent for success in the rumbustious world of local TV news, and who's the betting favorite (like Jessica Savitch) to become the first solo female anchor of a network news broadcast.

The story line defies synopsis, bopping about as it does from a robbery at a security depot to an explosion and killings at the San Francisco Presidio, to

an exclusive interview that Mary Reed nabs with a mysterious right-wing terrorist who calls himself Commander Zero and who says things like: "There is a secret pact between the Jews and the blacks...." "We white Americans have to claim back the land [of] our forefathers...." "Aren't you sick to your gut of some illegal alien stealing your job..., who's making money from selling thirty-dollar tickets to a [basket]ball game...to see some drug-crazed, hormone-altered, overpaid monkey jump up and down between two hoops?"

It's part fantasy, compounded of Paddy Chayevsky's *Network* and James L. Brooks's *Broadcast News*. There's a cast of (what seems) hundreds, leaving the reader to sort them all out as they come and go in a kind of MTV jumble of quick-cut scenes. There's a high-powered Hollywood agent who assures Mary he's going to make her bigger than Barbara Walters. There's Mary's boyfriend who's a bit of a scold and no fun. "That's what it takes to be a reporter these days," he whines. "[I]nterview...a terrorist killer...and then you're made. For God's sake, that's not journalism, it's simply pandering to the worst instincts of a sick society." (One wonders if he has met Eric Burns.) Then there's an assortment of anchormen, reporters, producers, detectives, robbers, and cultists. Ted Koppel makes a cameo appearance when he interviews Mary Reed for *Nightline*; so does ABC News president Rooney Arledge, who encounters her at a movie premiere and invites her to dinner.

It's all not meant to be taken terribly seriously (at least I don't *think* it is), and the prose is merely serviceable. Some of it reads less like a novel than a treatment for a novel; the omniscient, unnamed storyteller inflates the yarn with more summary and backstory than we need. But the offscreen frenzy of producing local TV news programs in moments of crisis is faithfully rendered. There's excitement and suspense in the narrative and a rollicking good scene at the end — involving Commander Zero, Mary Reed, and a shootout right in the anchor studio — that brings it all to satisfying closure. Stripped to its essentials, it might make a nifty movie starring ...well, how about Molly Ringwald? ♦



# SHORT TAKES

## HOMERLY ADVICE

When [Homer Bigart] was in Vietnam, I wrote him that when I encountered great art and great music, Bix Beiderbecke for instance, I despaired of ever doing anything enduring while working for a newspaper, even an eminent one. "As you say, the newspaper business is an inadequate vehicle, but it will take a profound psychological shock to make me ever want to rise above it," he wrote. "I have no burning message." And at another point, in a more practical mood: "You shouldn't listen to Biederbecke if it depresses you."

FROM THE INTRODUCTION BY BETSY WADE TO **FORWARD POSITIONS: THE WAR CORRESPONDENCE OF HOMER BIGART**, COMPILED AND EDITED BY BETSY WADE. UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS PRESS. 240 PP. \$24.95

## THE OVERSIGHT

When a man from Pennsylvania wrote Hodding Carter [in the 1940s] that he had subscribed to the *Delta Democrat-Times* for a year and had not seen one editorial denouncing intolerance, Hodding replied that during the previous year the paper had campaigned for employing blacks on the Greenville police force; published a series of articles on the woeful state of black school facilities in the county and slums, principally black, in town; vigorously endorsed construction of two swimming pools, equal in size and cost, one for blacks and one for whites, and seen the proposal passed with the help of about four hundred Negro votes; chronicled the county's approval of plans for a low-cost hospital with identical white and black wings, and for a new black grammar school in town, and authorization for

discrepancy in teachers' pay and against the beating by a deputy of a black prisoner who had killed a white man; applauded the inclusion of a black on a jury panel for the first time since Reconstruction, the congressional legislation for slum clearance and aid to education, and the increase in black farm ownership in Mississippi.

"But," he added, "since I didn't get around to an editorial denouncing intolerance, I herewith denounce it."

FROM **HODDING CARTER: THE RECONSTRUCTION OF A RACIST**, BY ANN WALDRON. ALGONQUIN BOOKS OF CHAPEL HILL. 384 PP. \$23.95

## OF TIME AND THE TARGET

Another aspect of politicians' vanity vis-à-vis the press: it makes a vast difference whether you are reading something disagreeable at approximately the same time that others are doing so, too. If, after, say, a month's absence abroad, your attention is drawn to an old attack, its effect is small. You know that nobody else is reading it at the same time. It is over. It has no more vitality than a few curled leaves in a gutter. But read on or close to the day of publication, it has an infinitely greater capacity to depress. Press criticism is more effective in causing private pain in politicians than in influencing public perception of them. This does not mean that it should not be made. What it does mean is that kind friends should refrain from drawing the attention of the subject to disagreeable articles which he has been lucky enough to miss. There is nothing to be done about them, and therefore no point.

FROM **A LIFE AT THE CENTER: MEMOIRS OF A RADICAL REFORMER**, BY ROY JENKINS. RANDOM HOUSE. 585 PP. \$30.





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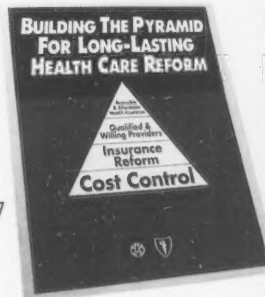
- when hospital rates go up
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# WHAT DRIVES HEALTH INSURANCE PREMIUM INCREASES?



# The Lower case

## 3 people missing as news storms batter Midwest

*The Press Democrat (Santa Rosa, Calif.) 5/9/93*

### Florida reporter completes sentence

*Editor & Publisher 4/24/93*

### Spotted owls clash migrating north to B.C.

*The Vancouver Sun 5/17/93*

The house belongs to Emily Kesecker who is in a nursing home and has been boarded up for several years.

*The Morgan Messenger (Berkeley Springs, W.Va.) 2/3/93*

### Ex-NBC exec gets chair

*The Miami Herald 4/15/93*



**Aging senator arrives at Washington hearing.**

*San Francisco Chronicle 5/19/93*

### Muskegon will fix streets and water plant

*The Muskegon (Mich.) Chronicle 2/25/93*

### Actor's death during filming usually career-limiting move

*The Toronto Star 4/21/93*

### Hospitals revive TV quarantine

*The Oakland (Calif.) Tribune 11/28/92*

The race also includes two of the five openly gay candidates running around the city — Jon Nalley and Robert Rygor.

*The New York Times 4/29/93*

### New York Mayoral Rivals Debate Crime Figures

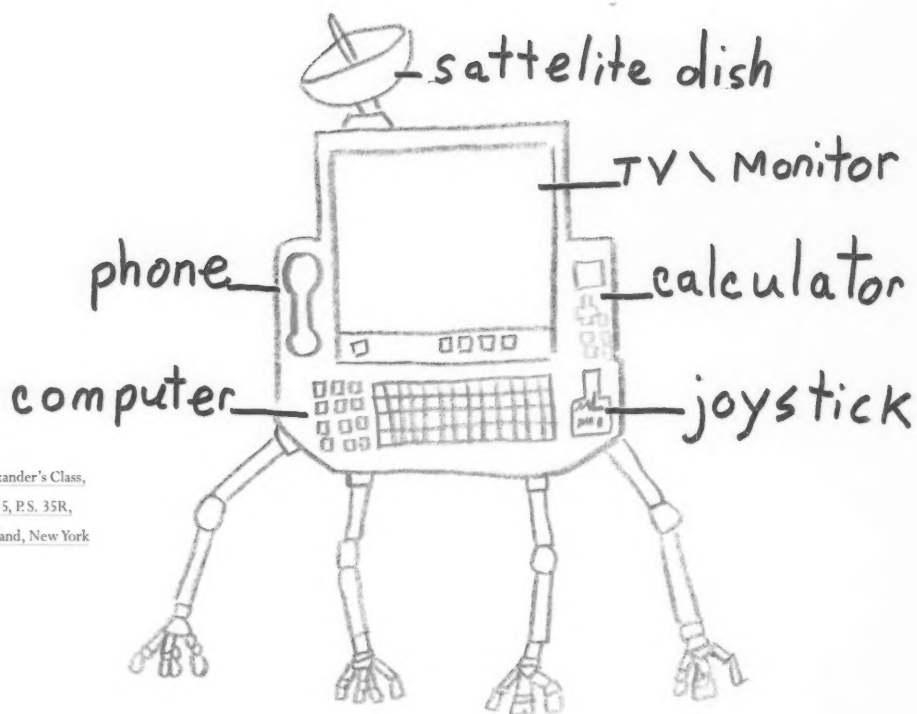
*The New York Times 4/6/93*

### Helix High honors student arrested in yearlong series of hate crimes

*San Diego-Tribune 5/15/93*

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